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EDITORIAL

Death runs loose

MR. CHARLES LAWRENCE, chief tester of a big London garage firm, was testing a car before overhaul when he ran into trouble caused by other drivers. A second car overtook him. A third car, coming the other way, caused the second to brake suddenly.

"I slammed my own brake pedal down," says Mr. Lawrence. "But nothing happened—the connecting rod had snapped. So my car hit the second one, and he cannoned into the third—a nasty triple smash."

Had the car already been overhauled, the defective brake rod would have been noticed, and no accident need have occurred.

APART from the approximate two per cent of accidents attributed to them in Ministry of Transport tables, there is a large "hidden total" caused by mechanical defects.

MR. CHARLES LAWRENCE
"I braked. Nothing happened"

Colonel H. Atherton, president of the Motor Schools Association, says: "A car owner does not notice the gradual deterioration of his brakes—until it is too late. An emergency happens, and he can't stop.

"If by regular inspection and adjustment all brakes were kept efficient, many accidents could be avoided."

It is illegal to run a mechanically unsound vehicle. Yet hundreds of thousands of drivers do it every day through negligence. A compulsory regular check-up would keep them within reasonable safety limits.

SEVEN years ago the Strauss Committee, a government inquiry reported that there should be a compulsory inspection. But nothing has been done.

Now comes a fresh broadside to shake official apathy—from Dr. W. H. Glanville, chief road expert of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research. He says: "We might expect that inspection of all vehicles would cost two and a half million pounds, and would hold out the hope of eliminating twenty per cent of all accidents and, therefore, of saving about twenty million pounds."

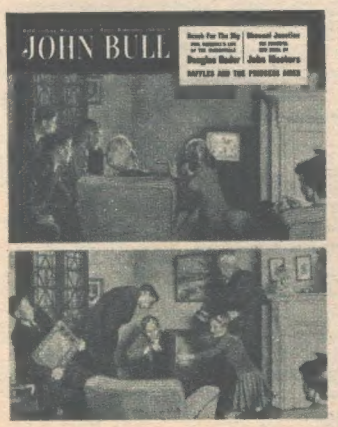
IN parts of America, brake inspection is compulsory; motorists pay ten shillings. If accidents in Britain were reduced by the same amount as in the U.S.A., a thousand fewer people would be killed on our roads every year, and 44,000 fewer injured.

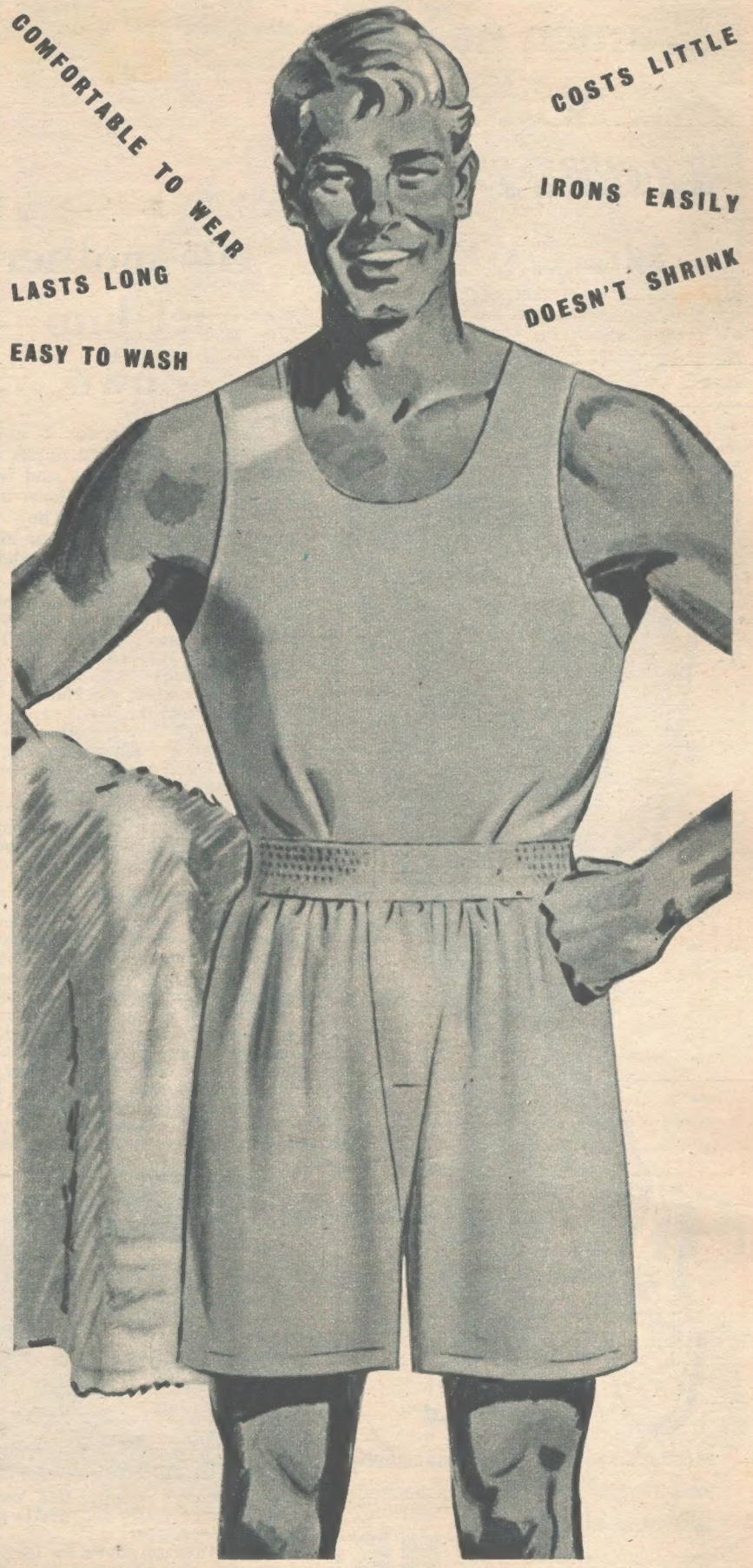
Now the Ministry of Transport announces that it is considering whether brake-testing for older cars should be "a matter of encouragement or compulsion."

There is only one sensible answer: make proof of roadworthiness a condition of granting a licence. Until this is done, death is being allowed to run loose on the roads.

THIS WEEK'S COVER

TELEVISION sets, like any other necessity of modern civilization, invariably choose the worst possible moment to go wrong. Some veteran cathode-ray tubes bought before the war are still giving bright and honourable service, but when they do at last pack up it will almost certainly be on an occasion awaited with great eagerness — such as the fireside Cup Final party pictured on the cover by K. J. Petts.





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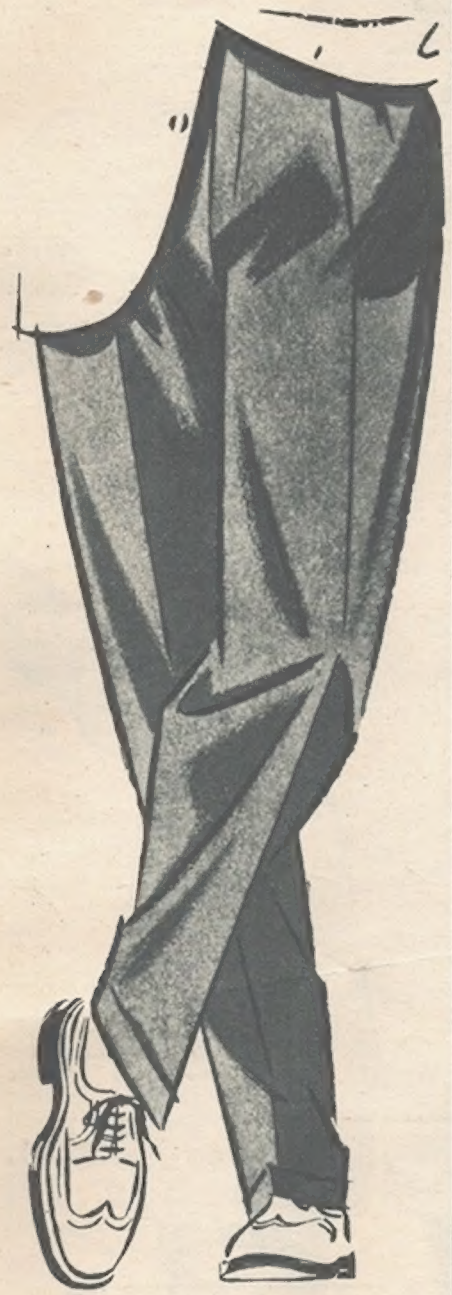

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FREE SPEECH

His mother let him down

EARLY last term, I noticed that some of my pupils were constantly teasing and bullying a boy who had just been transferred to the school. They were always taking his satchel or hiding his cap, and he was retaliating viciously and dangerously.

For a time, I could find no explanation for the incidents; the boy seemed a normal rugged nine-year-old. Then, one day, I left school earlier than usual, and went out through the gates at the time when the children were leaving. Down the road I saw a large car. The new boy's mother got out and greeted her son with a hug and a kiss. I heard one youngster mutter: "Look at the silly baby."

It's surprising how often parents make trouble for their children by this kind of thoughtless behaviour.—G., Warwickshire.

Draught Proof

BUILDING materials are scarce up here in the Arctic, and instead of wood we sometimes use ice. Slabs of about three feet by two feet by six inches are cut when the ice on the lakes is thick enough. They are carted to the site by dog team and sled. We usually employ a couple of Eskimos to do the actual building. First, the blocks are hoisted into place, and then they are securely cemented with snow wetted in warm water. When applied to ice in a temperature of

thirty degrees below, this cement freezes immediately and makes quite a strong structure.

My photograph shows the ice porch built for the Hudson's Bay Company's fur trading store here (the shovel is by the door). An ice porch serves during the winter as a sort of air-lock against the Arctic weather and as a hall in which to hang caribou skin clothing, which keeps best in the cold.—E. M. FRASER, Marine Radio Station, Chesterfield Inlet, Hudson Bay, Canada.

Under Discipline

MY fiancée, aged twenty-two, is a student nurse, and I have been appalled by the treatment she has received. Not only is she treated like a child in the rigidity and severity of the regulations concerning time off and the hours by which she has to be in at night, but more often than not she is so tired that she cannot enjoy what little leisure time she does get.

I have known occasions—when she was working in the operating theatre, for instance—when she has reported for duty at 6.30 a.m. and had to work through until 8.30 p.m., and in cases of emergency until 12.30 a.m. She has still been expected to be on duty at 6.30 a.m. the next day. This treatment is having a serious effect on her nerves, and although she loves nursing she sometimes feels like giving it up.—F., London, S.W.3.

Only Grammar

I STUDIED French for seven years at a grammar school, but when I went to stay with a Belgian family recently I found great difficulty in carrying on a proper conversation. What made it more humiliating was the fact that the son of the family, who is a medical student, and the daughter, a shorthand-typist, could speak quite good English, although they had never visited Britain or specialized in language studies. — MRS. JANE RYAN, Manchester.

A MASTER OF THE GOLDEN GAME

by Cledwyn Hughes

This fine story is one of four British entries in the World Prize story contest. It will appear complete . . .

IN JOHN BULL NEXT WEEK

Who's We

ON Tyneside, the word "we" is often used instead of "who." (Thus, "Who is it?" is rendered "We is't?") And "us" is used instead of the correct pronoun "we." A schoolmaster once asked a boy to make up a sentence with the word Tynemouth in it.

"Us went to Tinmuth," said the boy.

"We! We!" called out the master, meaning to correct him.

"Please, sir, me and mi father."—DAVID S. CROWTHERS, Churchill Street, Willington Quay, Wallsend, Northumberland.

In The Remove?

A FRIEND of ours has two daughters, both pupils at a high school. A month ago, the younger girl, who is thirteen, got out her homework. She had to write an essay on murder. Last week, the elder girl, aged fourteen, told her mother that she would be late home from school as there would be a debate after class. The subject was: "Is suicide justifiable?"—MRS. D. BALL, Riddings Road, Sheepridge, Huddersfield.

Lost Grip

SOME weeks ago, my father began to study hypnotism. He first got interested in the subject when he met an entertainer who does stage hypnotism as part of his act. The man told him of a simple test he uses to discover whether a person could be hypnotized easily. He grips their shoulders, and asks them to stare at a spot on the ceiling. Then he says in a low voice: "I'm holding you up"—he isn't, of course—"but now I'm letting you fall." If the person stumbles as he takes his hands away, the hypnotist knows he has a good subject. When my father told me about this test, I felt sure it was nonsense. But he tried it out on my mother, and over she went.—MRS. P. SULLIVAN, Liverpool.

Private View

I WAS very interested to learn that the late Dame Muriel Anderson painted pictures which were visual expressions of music ("Free Speech," April 3). During the past couple of years, my brother, John Wooler, has completed thirteen canvases which are representations in line and colour of emotional responses evoked by certain musical works, ranging from those of Beethoven to those of Ibert.

Of necessity, the paintings are extremely personal in nature. Perhaps my brother's visual interpretation [here reproduced] of Tchaikovski's fantasy overture "Romeo And Juliet" is the easiest to comprehend.—R. F. WOOLER, Calthorpe Street, Garston, Liverpool, 19.

Mirror Man

I ONCE had to interview a man whose first name ("Free Speech," April 10) was Yendis. His surname was Sidney.—H. E. PITT, Down End Road, Fareham, Hampshire.

Family Discord

WHEN I was a child sixty years ago, it was one of my greatest pleasures to take part in our family concert every Saturday evening. Mother was our pianist and Father the cellist. Three of the children played violins. We all sang. Years later, I taught my own children to play the piano, but they were never really fond of it. And there is only one pianist among all my seven grandchildren. I suppose the radio and cinema are to blame.—MRS. ALICE THOMSON, Bath.

Cold Comfort

AFTER my first winter in England, I have begun to think that we do not exaggerate when we say in Norway: "Two things make an Englishman upset: the ill-treating of animals, and central heating." I live in what I believe to be a typical English house, and I have certainly never had warmer toes and a colder body than this winter in front of a coal fire. I

was, therefore, quite relieved when I read that some homes with central heating are being built in this country (JOHN BULL Editorial, April 3). Perhaps I can now hope that one day I will get central heating without my English husband being too upset.—MRS. K., Hampshire.

Open fires are rare in Norway. They are lit only on special occasions. Most homes have central heating or enclosed stoves. Electricity is more widely used for secondary heating than in this country, as the hydro-electric plants produce it very cheaply.

Letters intended for publication should be as brief as possible and include the sender's full name and address. John Bull pays a guinea for every letter printed, and at usual rates for readers' photographs. Readers with personal problems should send inquiries (other than medical) to John Bull Free Advice Service with a stamped addressed envelope for reply.

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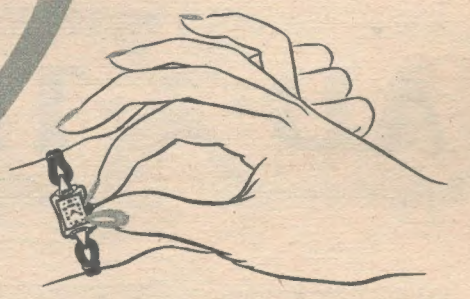

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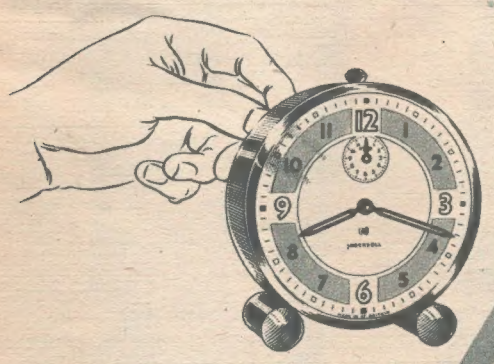

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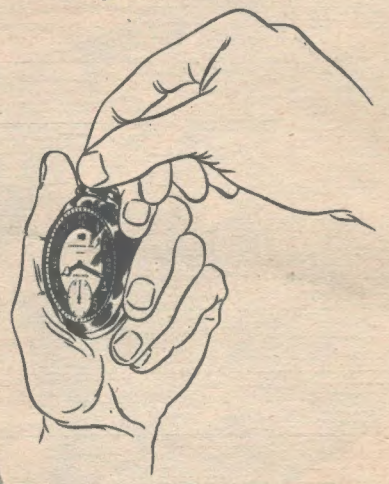

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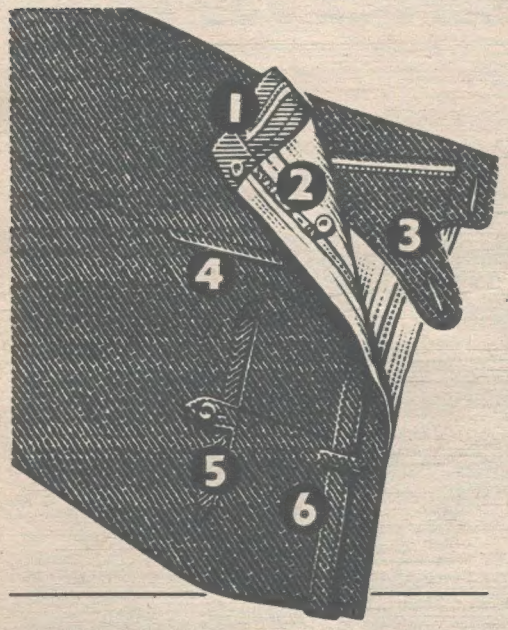

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now directed by John Collier

RAFFLES AND THE PRINCESS AMEN

by BARRY PEROWNE

Crack a bank vault? For a moment, I thought Raffles was off his head. Then I heard his plan . . . it all depended on the fabulous Princess Amen

IN THE LAVENDER TWILIGHT of a summer evening, a hansom clip-clopped westwards through the streets of London, carrying Raffles and myself to a dinner engagement. Not for some months had any felonious exploit replenished our joint exchequer, and we were discussing our financial situation. "Something," A. J. Raffles declared, "must be done about it, Bunny. Keeping one's end up comes expensive."

He took his cigararette-case from his breast pocket. We were in evening dress. The case he proffered me was gold. The cigarettes we lighted were his favourite Sullivans. Flipping the spent match at the jogging rump of the horse, he inhaled thoughtfully and looked at the buildings we were passing.

"A prosperous part of London," he remarked. "It symbolizes these climactic years of a great century and a great Queen. I hadn't realized before that there were quite so many banks in Kensington. Have you an account at any of them, Bunny?"

I had accounts, in various names, at half a dozen banks, as he had himself. It was a matter of common prudence, for men who at any moment might find it advisable to adopt some alternative identity.

"Just ahead," I replied, "there's a branch of the County and Continental. I've had an account there for the past four years in the name of Lesage. 'Lesage' is a man of slight build, with a scholarly stoop, a thin, tanned face, rimless spectacles, and prematurely white hair. The bank has no English address for him, as he's an Egyptologist and is abroad a good deal, delving beside the Nile. He appears at the bank to sweeten his account with a small deposit only on rare occasions."

"Too rare for his own liking, perhaps?" said

ILLUSTRATED BY EDWIN PHILLIPS

It was something Josephine said—or nearly said—that did it. Raffles and I pretended not to notice, but the family was staring at her aghast

Raffles, with a chuckle. "But a bright idea, Bunny—an Egyptologist. What made you hit on that?"

"Partly the fact that Egyptology is much in the fashion," I explained, "and partly the hope that the number of museums in this neighbourhood would furnish—by inference—a background to the character. In point of fact, the manager, one Purkiss, long ago deduced that Lesage must be a member of a field expedition sent out by one or other of the museums. Purkiss seems to think the occupation a romantic one, and the Egyptologist—though his balance is usually trifling—is one of the bank's favourite customers." I nodded at a building which the hansom was now passing. "That's the place."

Raffles glanced at it. From the windows, with their lower panes of frosted glass protected by grilles of spiked iron, the white light of gas-globes shone out into the purple dusk.

"A snug little bank," said Raffles approvingly. "Working late, aren't they?"

"Getting out the quarterly balances, no doubt," I said.

Raffles drew meditatively at his cigarette as our hansom swung into the quiet square where we were to dine at the home of a friend.

Dick Farr was waiting on the steps of his house to greet us as our hansom jingled to a standstill. He was a big, sandy-haired chap with a blunt face and rather solemn blue eyes. He and his elder brother Frank had been at school with us.

Frank had become a missionary and was out in West Africa. As for Dick, he had a vocation for medicine, and that he should have been eating his heart out on a high stool in a Threadneedle Street office, instead of studying to qualify as a doctor, was the fault of his father.

Old Ferdinand Farr, in his days as a country squire, had been a famous steeplechase-rider, a renowned port-drinker, and a notorious gambler. Horses, wine and cards had brought him so near to ruin that he was no longer a country squire, but lived, mortgaged to his purple nose and bushy eyebrows, in this Kensington square. About the only relic of past glory which remained to him was a jewelled scimitar, of great historic and intrinsic value, that dated from the days of an ancestor who had crusaded with Coeur-de-Lion.

DICK had told us, once: "The guv'nor's superstitious about it. He thinks if it went out of the family, after all these centuries, by any act of his, he'd be struck dead or something. A typical gambler's quirk. But for that, he'd sell it like a shot and invest the proceeds in Josie and Frank—and my medical studies, perhaps. Such a pity, really. We hate to see him torture himself about his past follies, just because of us. But he *will* do it, and that's why he drinks as he does."

There was an incident at dinner that very evening which started old Ferdy drinking. It was something his daughter said—or rather, nearly said. Josephine was blonde and twenty, with very clear blue eyes, and great beauty and character in her face. Her brother Frank, the missionary out in West Africa, was her hero. She glowed when she spoke of him.

"Frank's doing wonderful things. I'd give anything in the world to be able to go out there and work with him. Women *are* doing things like that nowadays," she said defensively, turning to her mother. "And Frank has all kinds of plans I could help him in, if only he could get them started. It's just a question of——"

She bit her lip suddenly. But the unspoken word—"money"—hung horribly in the air; for a moment the family stared at her, aghast. Raffles and I pretended to notice nothing amiss. Blushing, Josephine cast a covert, remorseful glance at her father. I saw the stricken look on the old man's purple face.

Raffles, in his easy way, changed the subject. But the damage was done, and old Ferdy, when the ladies had withdrawn, was pretty hard on the port—merciless, in fact. To wean him away from it before he sank under the table, Raffles asked if we might see the celebrated scimitar.

But if he hoped old Ferdy would take us to it, he was disappointed.

"Damned thing," the old man muttered. "I keep it at the bank—only place for it. Pass the port, Dick."

Dick froze on to the decanter. "Mother's expecting us in the drawing-room. Come along, guv'nor."

"Damned women," said old Ferdy.

He was well away. We had not been long in the drawing-room before he must needs want to play cards—and poker, to boot. The ladies gave him up as a bad job, and, with resigned expressions, went off to bed.

Raffles, closing the door on them, gave me a glance which I took to mean we must be easy on the old reprobate. I discarded, accordingly, the constituents of one or two promising hands. Then it dawned on me that Raffles—an impeccable figure opposite the increasingly tousled ex-squire—was playing a razor-edged game.

The chip values, at Dick's insistence, had been set low. Nevertheless, when it came to squaring up, Raffles had over ten pounds to come from Ferdy. The old man fished a rather meagre handful of assorted gold and silver from his pocket.

"Please don't run yourself short of ready," said Raffles, lighting a Sullivan. "A cheque'll do just as well, Mr. Farr."

Dick came out to the steps to see us off.

"A pleasant evening, Dick," said Raffles. "Sorry we couldn't see the scimitar. But I suppose the insurance premiums would be heavier if it weren't kept at a bank?"

"They're heavy, anyway," Dick said.

His "good night" was a bit curt, I thought. I could understand why. And when we had picked up a cab, and were clip-clopping back along the way we had come, under a horned moon hung silver in the sky, I could not help saying, "Granted we're hard up, A. J., but did you really have to take that tenner off poor old Ferdy?"

He seemed not to hear my question. "I see the lights are off in the bank," he said. "They must have got their balances out." He took a slip of paper from his pocket. "I also see from Ferdy's cheque that he banks at the same place as Lesage the Egyptologist——"

My heart gave a sudden hard thud. "So *that's* what you wanted to find out! But you can't be quixotic enough to think of——"

"Trying to crack a bank vault?" he said. He put a cigarette between his lips. "So as to put a packet of insurance money in an old gambler's hands, to enable him to get square with his conscience by giving his kids a fair start in life?"

He struck a match, touched the flame to old Ferdy's cheque. The light gleamed on his opera hat. The horse's hoofs clip-clopped.

"A mug's game, trying to crack a bank vault," said Raffles.

But I saw his odd smile, and the grey glint of his eyes, as he dipped his cigarette to the flame.

I WAS uneasy for a week afterwards. Nothing developed, however, and as time passed our evening at the Farrs faded from my mind. It was three or four months later, and cricket was over for the year, when one autumn night he took me to dinner at an Italian restaurant in Soho. It was one of those places of romantic assignation that have a mezzanine balcony divided into stuffily curtained cubicles, like theatre boxes; and in one of these, with the curtains closed, we dined by the light of candles with boudoir-pink shades.

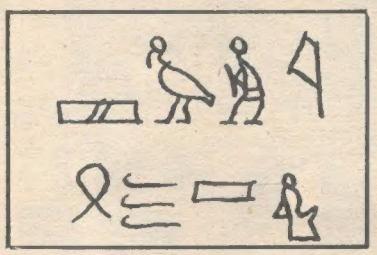
The place was not my style, and I said rather

I felt the hair beginning to rise on my scalp. Raffles, stooping, opened the lid, and in the flickering

light of the candle we saw her face. It seemed to convey an inhuman sense of serenity and wisdom.

pointed to a coffin-like box which lay on the floor. "Her Highness," he said.

The box was of some time-blackened wood, with a dim red diamond shape painted on each side, and here and there squares of hieroglyphs crudely painted in faded yellow, after this style:



Shipping labels stood out in sharp relief: *"Lesage—Alexandria to Tilbury"; "Baggage Hold"; "Not Wanted On Voyage"; "Fragile—This Side Up."*

"The box," Kern said, "has a lock that can be worked from the inside. The hieroglyphs here and there help to conceal the breathing-holes."

Raffles, stooping, opened the lid. The hair stirred on my scalp. The candlelight cast its flicker on a mummy-case. Its mask of carven wood, though worn and defaced by forty centuries in desert sands, yet conveyed an inhuman sense of serenity and wisdom.

"I was all last week fabricating Princess Amen," said Kern. "She's nothing but a lid, really, well pierced for breathing. Underneath are shavings——"

"On which," Raffles said, "I shall recline quite snugly. The mask slips off easily, Bunny, and Ivor's so arranged things that I can get my right hand to the inside of the lock." He dipped his cigarette in the flame of Kern's candle, and the light hollowed his eyes under the slanted brim of his opera hat. "Just before the bank closes for business tomorrow afternoon, Bunny, you'll deposit Princess Amen, for safe keeping, with your friend Mr. Purkiss, the manager."

"But——" I said, my heart thumping.

peevishly, "Why did we have to come here?"

"What's the matter, Bunny?" said Raffles. "Don't you like spaghetti?"

As he spoke, he slightly parted the curtains so that he could peer down into the main salon. A din of voices, and plinking of mandolins and jingling of tambourines, rose stridently from it.

"In point of fact," he said, dropping the curtain, "we came here to see a certain lady without being seen by her. I thought we ought at least to know her by sight, as she's on the eve of playing a decisive part in our affairs. She mustn't know us, though. Look discreetly and you'll see her down there across the salon at the table by the mural of Tiberius's villa. Red-haired woman with a champagne glass in her hand, talking to a cauliflower-eared man who looks like an ex-cruiserweight."

I made a chink in the curtains, put my eye to it, and through a floating haze of cigar-smoke saw the woman at once. She was strikingly handsome, though rather loudly dressed, with rust-coloured hair elaborately coiffured.

"Who is she?" I said, turning back to Raffles.

"Her name's Birdie Minton. That's her real name. She has a good many aliases." He poured Chianti into our glasses. "She was recommended to me, for a little adventure I have in mind, by the only person in London, other than yourself, who knows the truth about me—Ivor Kern, the 'fence' I do business with. You recall our visit to the Farrs? A day or two after we dined there Birdie called at the County and Continental Bank, Kensington branch."

I laid down my fork. My appetite had deserted me suddenly.

"Calling herself Mrs. Randolph," said Raffles, "and saying she'd recently returned from abroad and was house-hunting in London, she opened an account with a hundred pounds—advanced by Ivor—and also deposited with the bank, for safe keeping till she found a house, a large packing-case containing allegedly valuable silver and carpets. It's been in the bank's vault since then. The day after tomorrow, she'll call at the bank, explain that she's now found a house to her liking, and take her packing-case away. She'll deliver it to Ivor, and that'll conclude her part in the affair. Foolproof, as you see."

"But what's the point of it?" I said puzzled.

"The point of it," said Raffles, "is that when she withdraws the packing-case, *I* shall be in it!" He tossed aside his napkin. "Now, if you're not going to eat any more of your spaghetti, Bunny, we'll take a ride in a cab."

My mind was in a turmoil as the cab carried us through the rain-wet streets, glimmering in the lamplight, to a small shop in the King's Road, Chelsea. The shop, closely shuttered, bore the legend: *Antiques—Ivor Kern—Objets d'art.* As the cab rolled away, Raffles jerked the bell-pull in the dark doorway. I heard the bell jangling remotely within.

SUDDENLY the flap of the letter-slot, set vertically at eye-level in the door, was poked up. I saw the yellow glimmer of a candle. Raffles spoke softly through the slot. Bolts and chains rattled, the door opened a crack, we slipped inside.

Re-bolting the door, a thin, tall man in a tweed suit turned to us. He held up his candlestick. His dark eyes, behind a pair of pince-nez, regarded me with a quizzical intelligence.

"The Egyptologist, I presume?" he said dryly. "Princess Amen is waiting."

He motioned us to follow him. Shapes of furniture bulked darkly about us, shadows loomed and shifted, innumerable clocks ticked.

Bewildered, I whispered to Raffles, "Princess Amen?"

"An old flame," he said.

Kern opened the door of a rear room. He

RAFFLES went on imperturbably: "When the vault's locked I shall desert Princess Amen. I shall have my bull's-eye lantern, my skeleton keys, and the run of the vault for the rest of the night. It's a pity I daren't meddle with their bullion or specie, but any defalcations of that kind would be spotted as soon as the staff arrives in the morning. No, reluctantly I shall confine myself to getting old Ferdy's scimitar from his deposit-box—and to mulcting any other boxes which strike me, on investigation, as grossly over-stuffed with hoarded gems and negotiable bonds. About an hour before the staff is due to arrive in the morning, I shall get—with my plunder—into Mrs. Randolph's packing-case."

I seized on a flaw. "But isn't that already full of stuff?"

"Tarnished electro-plate and threadbare carpets," he said. "I shall transfer them to Princess Amen. The point is, Bunny, if you were to deposit Princess Amen just before close of business tomorrow and remove her just after opening of business next day, it might look fishy. I go in inside Princess Amen, but I come out in Mrs. Randolph's packing-case. She'll call for it ten minutes after the bank opens on Saturday."

I stared at him hypnotized, feeling cold beads on my brow.

"Princess Amen," he said, "together with Lesage's and Mrs. Randolph's current balances, we shall write off to running expenses. The Farr heirloom Ivor here will hold for us for a few years. Later, when Miss Josephine and Dick and Frank have got their lives well established on the basis of the insurance indemnity, we'll find out subtly whether the recovery of the heirloom would make them—or old Ferdy—any happier. If it would, then we'll contrive for the police to 'recover' it, and the Farrs can come to terms with the insurance company. Naturally, anything *else* we may glean from the vault is our

I heard Ferdy say to the cashier: "I'll trouble you to have up my deposit-box." I didn't wait for more, but shot past him out of the door

own business. We aren't purely philanthropists!"

He smiled at my expression, pressed my shoulder with a friendly hand.

"Cheer up, Bunny," he said. "All *you* have to do is entrust the Princess to your old friend Mr. Purkiss."

An autumnal drizzle had begun to fall, and raucous newsboys were shouting "Latest race results! All the winners!" when the driver provided by Ivor Kern reined in his neat brougham before the County and Continental Bank a few minutes before closing time.

In the gloom of the brougham, I was cramped by the great box, which was placed obliquely across the facing seats, from corner to corner. I tapped lightly on the box, heard Raffles's answering tap from within it, and, drawing in my breath deeply, stepped from the brougham and walked into the bank. The cashier glanced at me, in my guise as Lesage, and at once smiled in recognition.

"Good afternoon, sir! Back in England again?"

I managed a smile, and asked if Mr. Purkiss were busy.

"He's only signing his letters, sir," said the cashier. "Perhaps you'd care just to tap on his door there?"

I tapped, was bade enter, and the manager, a sturdy, grey-bearded man in a cutaway coat, rose with outstretched hand and came towards me.

"Why, Mr. Lesage! Where have you dropped from this time?"

He pushed forward a chair for me, and after an exchange of civilities, I broached the matter of the mummy.

"Normally," I explained, "I should have left it with the museum authorities, but I'm sorry to say I've just had a rather disagreeable half-hour with them. I feel they've treated me parsimoniously, and I don't intend they shall have what I've brought back with me this time. I shall negotiate elsewhere. In the meantime I should like to entrust it to your vault—provided, that is, that you can assure me that the vault is quite dry and warm?"

"I can do so without reserve," he declared heartily, and, jerking a bellpull, said to the burly man who answered the summons, "Ah, porter, Mr. Lesage has a box outside. Ask Mr. Andrews to help you bring it down to the vault. Now, Mr. Lesage, if you would care to step this way——"

He opened an inner door. I followed him down a short flight of steps to a gaslit stone passage. "Warm and dry, you notice," he said. "Now here is the vault."

The immense door, as thick as that of a casemate, stood half open. As we entered, a rather dandified young man, who was checking some documents on top of a safe which stood in the centre of the vault, shuffled them together hastily.

"You may go, Mr. Dacres," Purkiss said curtly, and the young man, thrusting the papers into a deed-box, locked it, replaced it on a rack, and made himself scarce.

Purkiss watched him go. "These young clerks of today!" he said to me. "I dare say he was reading the racing results. Really, Mr. Lesage, you've no conception of the material one has to deal with these days!"

The vault was the size of a large room. The iron racks which lined the walls were laden with japanned deed-boxes and steel deposit-boxes, large and small. Crates, domed trunks, even gun-cases, stood here and there about the floor. Each was labelled, and a yellow line painted on the floor marked out neatly the space it occupied. The blood throbbed in my temples as I noticed a large packing-case labelled: MRS. RANDOLPH.

"A roomy, dry, secure vault," said Purkiss. "Ah, here comes your box. We'll have it just here, Mr. Andrews, if you please. Gently now, porter. Thank you, that will do." He stood looking down at the box, shaking his head, as the two men left us. "The strangest treasure our vault has ever housed," he said. "Might I——"

"Of course!" Taking the key from my pocket, I unlocked the box, raised the lid.

He gazed down reverently at the worn, serene mask of Princess Amen. "Three thousand—four thousand years?" he said, his voice hushed. "It is a sobering thought, Mr. Lesage."

I re-locked the box, we went back upstairs to his office, he wrote me out a deposit receipt. The bank now having closed for business, he ushered me off the premises himself. And with the closing of the door on me, the sound of bolts being shot, my part in the affair was finished. The die was cast. Raffles was in the vault.

It had been so easy. Reaction to tension left me feeling drained and unreal as I stood there in the rain, gazing at the closed doors.

Kern's coachman drove me to my flat in Mount Street. I let myself in furtively, careful to avoid any neighbours who might spot my whitened hair, and locked the door. Lighting the gas in my sitting-room, I poured myself a strong whisky-and-soda and sank into a chair.

By now that massive door of the vault would have been swung into place, the lock and burglar alarms set, Purkiss and his staff gone home, the bank in darkness. . . .

Suddenly the door bell rang, jerking me wildly out of my seat. I almost ran into the hall. Forgetting my whitened hair, I unlocked the door, opened it, glimpsed a tall, black-clad figure. It was Ivor Kern. He thrust in past me. I relocked the door, turned on him. There was a sheen of moisture on the pallor of his face.

"It's all up," he said. "Have you seen the paper?"

He thrust an evening paper at me, and I saw the headline: "£500 CONFIDENCE TRICK—TOURIST VICTIMIZED—WOMAN SOUGHT—BELIEVED FLED COUNTRY."

"Birdie," he said. "She's fled, all right. The instant I saw that, I got in touch with a crony of hers—ex-cruiserweight she goes around with. I've just come from him. She's gone. Got clean away on the Dover-Calais boat this morning. She's in Paris by now."

His dark eyes stared at me. "You realize what it means?" he said. *"There's no Birdie—alias Mrs. Randolph—to collect that packing-case from the bank tomorrow!"*

I did not breathe. This was a nightmare. The clock ticked steadily. The gas-mantle made a soft roaring. Kern went to my bookcase. He splashed out whisky from the decanter on the brass tray.

"Tomorrow's Saturday," he said. "Bank shuts at noon. Assume the fact that the deed-boxes have been looted is not discovered during the course of the morning. The vault won't be opened till Monday morning—a further forty-eight hours, on top of the twenty-odd he'll already have been in there. Stale air, thirst, starvation—by Monday morning he'll probably be unconscious, possibly dead." He shrugged. "It comes to every cracksman, Manders—their luck runs out. They're too clever by half, they try it once too often, and——" he snapped his fingers—"finish!"

My lips were dry. "We've got to help him, Kern."

"How?" said Kern. "I know nobody who could crack a bank vault. And it's out of the question to try to get some other woman to impersonate 'Mrs. Randolph.' It wouldn't work—not with a *bank*, Manders. No, this is the end of it. . . ."

"It isn't," I said thickly. "Not by a long chalk. It's a long shot, but—lend me a tin of varnish and a paintbrush from your shop, and we'll see!"

It was the thinnest of thin chances that sheer desperation had incubated in my mind. And in the cold light of morning, when I was shown into Purkiss's office at the bank, it seemed scarcely a chance at all, and the only item on the credit side was the fact that neither the clerks and cashiers outside, nor Purkiss himself, showed any sign of excitement, as they certainly would have done had they discovered as yet anything amiss in the vault.

"So sorry to bother you," I said to Purkiss, "but, you know, I'd hardly left here yesterday when it dawned on me that I'd entirely omitted what the museum people would have seen to at once. Most important. That is, to give the mummy-case a light coat of preservative varnish before storing. If you wouldn't mind—I've brought the stuff with me. . . ."

He glanced with a frown at the tin and brush I held. "Will it take you long, Mr. Lesage? Saturday morning is a very busy time——"

"A mere matter of minutes, Mr. Purkiss," I said earnestly.

He fingered his watch-chain, his bearded lips pursed. I could see he was annoyed. It was touch and go. I seemed to hear the thin ice cracking under me in all directions. Abruptly he nodded. I breathed again. He rose and led the way down to the vault.

I dreaded what I might see there, but all seemed in order. The boxes on the racks looked undisturbed. There on the floor, in their yellow-painted squares, stood the domed trunks, the gun-cases, the Egyptian box—and Mrs. Randolph's packing-case. Sweat started out on me at the sight of it.

"Be as quick as you can, please," said Purkiss.

Naturally, he had no intention of leaving me. I had not hoped for such an impossibility. Raffles was in that packing-case. I knew he must be listening intently, expecting at any second to feel the packing-case lifted and borne out. The most I hoped to do was to convey to him, in some form of words addressed ostensibly to Purkiss, that things had gone wrong, that he

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Part 6 of Paul Brickhill's best-seller ***REACH FOR THE SKY***

Bader tames a squadron of rebels

The Canadian pilots were a wild lot, and bitter about their casualties in France. They were in no mood to be led by a legless man—neither was he prepared to take a back seat

IT WAS IRONIC that Douglas Bader's first posting since rejoining the R.A.F. should have been to 19 Squadron at Duxford. Duxford was the place where he had said goodbye to the Air Force for ever, or so he thought. That was in 1933, when the Air Ministry had decreed that Bader, whose legs had been amputated after an air crash, could not be allowed to fly again.

Now things were different. It was February, 1940: the R.A.F. needed pilots, especially men of Bader's calibre. "He's the type we want," Air Vice-Marshal Halahan had written when Bader went before the medical board. "If he's fit, pass him." Fit? On his two artificial legs, Bader could not only walk without a stick but play golf, tennis and even squash. Applied to him, the word "cripple" lost its meaning.

As he drove past the guardroom, Bader was immediately aware that Duxford had changed in the seven years. The guardroom itself was new and bigger, and so was the mess, but the main change lay in the faces there; they all looked about twenty-one. Yet so they had been in 1933, too. Bader, sitting alone in the anteroom, became sharply aware that he would be thirty in exactly a fortnight and that it was he

Autumn, 1940: Douglas Bader poses nonchalantly on a Hurricane wing. "It's impossible even to imagine he has two artificial legs," said a fellow pilot

who had changed most. His only cheerful moment in the mess that evening was meeting "Tubby" Mermagen again. Years ago he had known Mermagen as a pilot officer, but Mermagen now commanded the other squadron at Duxford, No. 222, which flew Blenheims. It was fun to talk over old times, but when he took off his legs to go to bed he again felt himself to be a comparatively elderly flying officer.

Geoffrey Stephenson, a friend from his Cranwell days and now his squadron leader, came back and Bader greeted him with a glad cry. Next morning he went up in a Spitfire for the first time. He took off without any nerves, rapidly got the feel of her, and liked the way she handled like a highly strung thoroughbred. Soon, old emotions were stirring within him. In this élite of beardless youth he had more seniority than anyone and twice as many flying hours as most. Long ago he had been the golden boy of such a squadron; now he was the new boy—the "sprog"—and like a tide in him rose the need to prove himself equal to the young pilots.

Crashed Plane Through Roof

On February 13 his flight commander, an unblooded veteran of twenty-five, led him aloft for his first formation flying in a Spitfire, and Bader, by God, was going to show him—and anyone else who cared to see. Like the old days in Gamecocks, he tucked his wing in about three feet behind his leader's and stuck there, rocklike, through the whole flight. It takes quick hands and rapt concentration to do that; you watch your leader, not where you're going.

Coming in to land, the flight commander dipped low beside a wooden hut. Some instinct made Bader look ahead for a second, and at the last moment he saw the hut and that he could not miss it. Shoving on throttle, he yanked back on the stick and the fighter reared up, engine blaring, and the tail smashed into the wooden roof, and ploughed through, losing the tail wheel. The rocking fighter was still flying and he steadied her, brought her round again and landed her on the naked rump of the tail.

The flight commander came across laughing and said: "I'm awfully sorry, ol' boy. Most extraordinary thing—d'you know, not long ago I landed a chap in a tree just the same way." He never forgot the blunt details which Bader then told him about his character.

Easy Target For The Enemy

Most days they spent practising the three officially approved methods of attacking bombers. In "attack number one," for instance, the fighters swung into line astern behind the leader and followed him in an orderly line up to the bomber, took a quick shot when their turn came in the queue and swung gracefully away after the leader again—presenting their bellies predictably to the enemy gunner. Long ago the theoreticians at Fighter Command had decided that modern aircraft, especially fighters, were too fast for the dog-fight tactics of the first World War. Bader thought that was all nonsense.

"There's only one damn way to do it," he growled to Stephenson, ". . . that's for everyone to pile in together from each side as close to the Hun as they can and let him have the lot. Why use only eight guns at a time when you can use twenty-four from different angles?"

Stephenson and the others argued: "But you don't *know*, do you? *No* one knows."

"The boys in the last war knew," he said, "and the basic idea is the same now. No Hun bomber's going to stooge along in a straight line and let a row of chaps queue up behind and squirt at him one after the other. He'd jink all over the place. In any case, it won't be one; it'll be a lot of bombers sticking together in tight formation to concentrate their fire."

Probably, after the first pass or two, the bomber pack could be split up, he considered. There'd be single bombers around then, but the fighters would be split up, too, and there'd be dog-fights all over the sky, every man for himself. "The chap who'll control the battle will still be the chap who's got the height and sun, same as the last war," he said. "That old slogan of Ball, Bishop and McCudden, 'Beware of the Hun in the sun,' wasn't just a funny rhyme. Those boys learned from experience."

Some of the other pilots ragged him about being old fashioned, and Stephenson soothed him, saying in reasonable tones: "You might be right, Douglas, but we've got to keep on doing what we're told until we find out for ourselves."

Tubby Mermagen's 222 Squadron at Duxford was changing its Blenheims for Spitfires and some of the crews were being posted away. In the mess one night, Mermagen buttonholed Bader and casually said: "I want a new flight commander. I don't want to do the dirty on Geoffrey, but if he's agreeable, would you come?" Beaming, Bader remarked with vigour that he would be delighted. "Good show," said Mermagen. "I'll talk to Geoffrey and then fix it with the A.O.C."

Ordered To Cover A Convoy

Convoy patrol next day had a new savour. Barring accidents, Air Vice-Marshal Leigh-Mallory, the Air Officer Commanding, was almost sure to approve. In the morning Bader, who now led a section, flew over to the advanced base at Horsham to await convoy patrol orders. They had been on the ground only about five minutes, sipping at cups of tea, when the operations phone rang and they got the order to "scramble" (take off immediately) to cover a convoy. An unidentified aircraft had been plotted near it. Bader put his tea down and lurched as fast as he could after the other running pilots to his Spitfire.

Quickly he clipped his straps and pressed the starter button; the still-hot engine fired instantly and he was still winding his trimming-wheel as the plane went booming across the grass. The other two Spitfires were shooting past him, pulling away, and he sensed vaguely at first, then with sudden certainty, that his aircraft was lagging.

On the far side of the field, a low stone wall seemed to be rushing nearer, but still the Spitfire stuck to ground. He hauled desperately on the stick and the nose pulled up as she lurched off at an unnatural angle, not climbing. His right hand snapped down to the undercart lever, but almost in the same moment the wheels hit the stone wall and ripped away.

Wing-tip Hit Ploughed Field

At nearly eighty miles an hour the little fighter slewed, dipped a wing-tip into a ploughed field beyond, and then slithered on her belly with a rending noise across the soft earth. She jerked to a stop in a cloud of flying dirt, and the Perspex hood of the cockpit snapped forward and hit him on the back of the head.

As he sat there with everything so suddenly quiet he could hear the silence and the hot metal of the engine tinking as it cooled. Automatically his hand went out and cut the switches, and then his eyes wandered round the cockpit looking for the answer to the crash. It stared back at him—the black knob of the propeller lever on the throttle quadrant poking accusingly at him, still in the coarse pitch position. His stomach turned. Oh, hell, not that classic boob! He couldn't have! But he had. Angrily he banged the knob in.

Apart from the aggravating crack on the head he seemed to be undamaged and he hauled himself out of the cockpit. He started walking back across the aerodrome just as the ambulance and fire-truck appeared. Men jumped out and ran up and when they asked what had happened, he only grunted surlily: "Coarse pitch." They drove him back to the operations hut. Another Spitfire was parked there and he climbed in, started up, waspishly pushed the propeller into fine pitch and took off to join the other two aircraft. By the time he landed at Duxford, after an uneventful patrol, he had a splitting headache.

Geoffrey Stephenson said wonderingly. "Why the hell did you go and do a silly thing like that, taking off in coarse pitch?"

"Because I forgot to put it into fine, you

"Tubby" Mermagen, 222 Squadron leader, relaxes at the dispersals hut. Bader flew under his command in the air battles at Dunkirk

Douglas Bader (smoking a itching for a fight. "Good

pipe) and fellow pilots, May, 1940. The phoney war was over and he was show, darling, isn't it?" he said to his wife. "Now we can get at them"

When Bader took over the unruly Canadian squadron he soon captivated wild, fearless Stan Turner. "That guy's a goddam fireball," said Stan

clot," Bader snarled at him, and stumped off.

He must have hurt himself somewhere—he could hardly walk. In his room he undressed to lie down, and when he took his trousers off realized why he had been walking so shakily: the shins of both artificial legs were smashed in—deep dents that made both legs bend forward like bows. They must have been jammed under the rudder pedals in the crash. He hadn't felt a thing.

Sitting on the bed gazing at them, it occurred to him what would have happened if he had not lost his real legs. Not hard to imagine: both broken and probably the bones splintered. He'd probably have been on the operating table now, with a doctor, perhaps, reaching for the knife to take them off.

He unstrapped his legs and took them off, feeling more amused. As he strapped on his spare pair something else occurred to him. Leigh-Mallory was not likely to make a flight commander of any prune stupid enough to take off in coarse pitch. He uttered an uncouth word.

Days passed and no message came from Leigh-Mallory. Then the A.O.C. visited Duxford on a routine inspection and sent for him. Bader walked in and saluted. The thickset, square-faced man behind the desk regarded him sombrely. "Bader," he said, "Squadron Leader Mermagen wants you as a flight commander."

He Had No Excuse To Offer

Bader's face stayed expressionless. Leigh-Mallory seemed to be thinking and the silence dragged. Bader had a wild, frail hope that he had not heard of the Spitfire.

"I see you took off in coarse pitch the other day and broke a Spitfire," Leigh-Mallory said.

(Hell!)

"Yes, sir."

"That was very silly, wasn't it?"

Another silence, very sheepish. Leigh-Mallory was looking at a piece of paper—Bader's accident report.

"I'm glad to see you've made no attempt to excuse yourself," Leigh-Mallory remarked in quite a reasonable voice.

"There wasn't any excuse, sir."

"No, there's no excuse for that sort of thing," said the A.O.C. A pause. "Anyway, you're going to 222 Squadron as a flight commander."

There were prompt results of Bader's promotion to flight lieutenant. He brought his wife Thelma, who was living near Bagshot, to stay at a pub just outside Duxford. He lost the awkward feeling of being an old boy returned to school to pass his exams again. He told his pilots that the Fighter Command attacks were no damn good except as training for flying discipline.

Attack From Out Of The Sun

Even in the shadowed times, Bader's presence had tended to command a room and now, once more with responsibility and leadership, he spoke with unmistakable authority. For some days he led his pilots into the air to do the official Fighter Command attacks. In turn he sent each pilot up as a target aircraft, telling him to turn round in the cockpit and watch each fighter in the approved procession pop up one by one and break away in the same direction, presenting his belly for a sitting shot. When they came down he said: "Now, you can see what's liable to happen to you." Then he took them up for his own style of fighting, leading two or three at a time, darting down out of the sun on each side of a target plane and breaking sharply away forwards and below.

The pilots were beginning to get restive. The war had been going for eight months and none of them had even seen a German aircraft. Early in May a new squadron arrived at Duxford, No. 66. Its commanding officer, pint of beer in hand, cheerfully hailed Bader in the mess. "Ha," he said, "fiddled my way out of Training Command." It was Rupert Leigh. Odd how the old Cranwell chums were getting together—Stephenson, Leigh and Bader. After a week even Leigh was bored with training.

On May 10, Leigh drove over to pick Thelma up at the pub and drive her back for lunch at the mess with Douglas (who was on readiness). Climbing into the car, Thelma commented: "You look very gay this morning, Rupert."

Leigh said excitedly: "Haven't you heard? The balloon's gone up. Jerries are on the move." He started telling her about Hitler's attack on France and the Low Countries, and she listened and said quietly: "I suppose you'll all be very happy now."

In the mess Douglas waved to her from a crowd of jubilant pilots, stumped over, put his arm round her and hugged. "Good show, darling, isn't it?" he exulted. "Now we can get at them." He was nearly on fire with joy. She said unenthusiastically: "I suppose it had to start some time."

Yet nothing seemed to happen at Duxford except the same old stuff, practice flying and convoy patrols. Most of the pilots began complaining that the war would be over before they got their chance. On May 22 the hiatus ended—but not agreeably. The squadron was posted north to Kirton-in-Lindsey — convoy patrols again! They did not feel heroic. In France the armies were being thrust back into unprepared positions.

Surprise Take-off At Dawn

On the evening of the twenty-seventh, Bader went early as usual to bed. In darkness he came up out of sleep. A hand was shaking his shoulder and a voice saying: "Wake up, sir! Wake up!" The light clicked on and he blinked and scowled at the batman who stood there.

"Squadron's got to take off for Martlesham at 4 a.m., sir," said the batman. "It's three o'clock now."

"What the hell for?"

"Dunno, sir, but they said it was very urgent."

Still half-asleep and irritable he strapped on his legs, then thumped the other pilots awake. Mermagen arrived, and said: "I don't know what it's about but we're heading south and not taking any kit. Must be a flap about something."

Dawn glowed in the east as the squadron shook themselves into formation in the still air, and half an hour later they were landing in sections through feathers of waist-high mist on Martlesham Aerodrome, near Felixstowe, on the East Coast. Another squadron of Spitfires had

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by JOHN HARMAN

Officially, he's a civil servant. But his job is to pack elephants and houses, teddy bears and diamonds into the British Industries Fair—biggest shop window in the world

PLANS FOR THE 1953 British Industries Fair had been completed when B.O.A.C., whose stand was in the middle of the crockery section, decided to fly two elephants from India and exhibit them as examples of freight. Joseph Reading, the director of the Fair, promptly arranged for the stand to be circled by extra-strong fencing. Drinking water was laid on, drains were dug and heated sleeping quarters built. Finally, as a touch of showmanship, he ordered plates of fruit salad so that visiting celebrities could be photographed feeding the animals.

Reading, who has a seventh-floor office in a Board of Trade building in Bloomsbury, is a dark and lean six-footer with a brisk, confident manner. As organizer of the London half of the B.I.F. at Olympia and Earls Court—the other half at Castle Bromwich is run separately by the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce—he marshals seventeen miles of stands displaying jewellery, toys, household gadgets, furniture, clothes and thousands of other products.

One arrival at Olympia which caused nearly as much trouble as the elephants was a huge fifty-three ton mobile printing plant. "It had to be moved inch by inch on to a stand which was over some wine vaults," says Reading. "We couldn't be certain that the floor would hold." Large exhibits at this year's Fair include bungalows, a school, an operating theatre and a thirty-six foot yacht in full sail.

Takes A Year To Organize

Taking into account the value of exhibits and costs of promotion, the B.I.F. is a £10 million event. It is the world's biggest national shop-window—and takes a year to prepare. Reading started to plan for the 1954 B.I.F., to be held from May 3 to May 14, when the doors closed in 1953.

By last August, thirty thousand British manufacturers had been invited to reserve stands. By November, his high-pressure publicity machine was in action and several million catalogues, folders, posters and sticker stamps had been distributed to embassies, consulates and trade posts abroad. Personal invitations to come to Britain and tour the Fair had been sent to more than a hundred thousand buyers in nearly a hundred countries.

As the B.I.F. begins on the Monday after Cup Final Saturday, many foreigners wrote pleading for tickets for Wembley. Others did not realize that it is a trade fair, devoted mainly to increasing exports, and has no sideshows. "I had to refuse offers from a Spanish indoor parachutist, an Italian choir, and a Pakistani wall of death rider

Reading acts as Princess Margaret's guide at last year's B.I.F. In spite of elaborate plans, royal visits have given him anxious moments

Reading halted the slump in B.I.F. bookings by selling the Fair to industry. On a visit to an exhibitor, he sees a new idea in belts

At Earls Court, Reading discusses the layout of the year's Fair with his manager. "Buyers come to see exhibits, not frills," he insists

who wanted to do his act on a pedal cycle," says Reading.

Well-known manufacturers whose goods need little publicity often book display space solely for prestige, but the majority of exhibitors value the Fair as a springboard for launching new ideas. Plastic blinkers for hens and wickerwork stomachs for actors are specialized innovations which have caught the attention of buyers. On show for the first time this year are an electric toothbrush, a Teddy bear which rocks itself to sleep, a musical powder compact, and dehydrated cosmetic creams which need only the addition of hot water.

In order to deal with difficulties on the spot, Reading and about twenty-five of his staff move into temporary offices in Olympia a week in advance. Last-minute setbacks have included a flood of rainwater which had to be mopped up before the Fair could open and, once, the shifting of a fully furnished six-room house. "The exhibitor decided that the chimney could not be seen to the best advantage, so the house was put on skids and towed to a fresh site by tractor."

Reading dreads that, after his months of detailed preparation, no one will turn up. Nevertheless, in 1953 thousands of visitors clicked through the turnstiles every day. This year, the six hundred thousandth buyer since the war is expected.

"Cowboys" Fired Six-shooters

Although the atmosphere of the B.I.F. is usually quiet and dignified, Reading has had to restrain exhibitors. "A manufacturer of cowboy outfits hired some actors and set them strolling through the Fair strumming ukuleles and letting off six-shooters," he says. On another occasion sales staff began a fight over commission.

For the duration of the B.I.F., Olympia and Earls Court become small cities, each with its own medical services and police station. Security arrangements are handled by Bill Burnham, a burly ex-superintendent of the Metropolitan Police. He controls a force of a thousand uniformed and plain clothes men, many of whom mingle with the crowd. During the day, gem-encrusted bracelets, brooches and tiaras in the jewellery section—"Millionaires' Row"—sparkle in reinforced showcases fitted with special alarm devices. At night, Burnham removes them under armed guard to the Olympia vaults. His most precious charge was the Queen's £60,000 diamond necklace; his oddest a collection of antique razors insured for about £3,000.

Ordered Gold-plated Tea Sets

The B.I.F. had its heyday shortly after the war when goods were scarce and business boomed. In 1951 a contingent of Australians, wealthy after a record wool-clip, casually ordered luxuries ranging from cabin cruisers to gold-plated tea sets. The Fair, however, was crumbling financially. Losses averaged £30,000 a year. Commercial interest in it waned as the leather, toy and plastics trades, among others, held independent exhibitions. Between 1951 and 1953, exhibitors in London dropped by a third.

One of Reading's first actions on taking over as director in January last year was to appoint a sales manager and brief him with the task of selling more space. Newspapers criticized Reading and accused him of throwing public money away, but he claims that the appointment has since been justified. The downward trend in the number of exhibitors has been halted. Current bookings are slightly up on last year's figure.

As economy measures, Reading reduced his staff from forty to thirty—"it was regarded as heresy in the Civil Service"—and cut expenditure on decorations to a minimum. When subordinates mourned the absence of artists and designers who at one time worked on the Fair, he observed bluntly that buyers come to see the exhibits, not the frills.

"The income from stands is £100,000, but expenses are heavy," he says. "About £77,000 goes on the hire of Olympia and Earls Court." Helped by the £5,000 which should be taken at the turnstiles, he hopes to break even on this year's Fair. Problems of making next year's B.I.F. pay its way will not concern him, however. The Board of Trade is shortly handing over the management of the London sections to a government-backed private company.

An athletic forty-seven year old Londoner who is married, with four children, Reading is graded in the Civil Service as a £2,000-a-year assistant secretary. He has acquired a reputation for unorthodox methods.

"He detests paperwork and is proud of the fact that he has never drawn up a form," says one of his staff. "He has firm faith in his own judgment. He always listens attentively to suggestions—and often ignores them."

Swift Climb In Civil Service

On leaving school, Reading took a degree in electrical engineering. He worked in South America for a wireless company until the slump, when he was given a broad hint that his resignation would be appreciated. Then he joined the Department of Overseas Trade and began a swift climb in the Civil Service. A head for figures resulted in posts as private secretary to two Comptrollers-General. Later he was transferred to the British Embassy in Washington.

During the war, he was with the Ministry of Economic Warfare. One assignment involved a trip to Africa to investigate a leakage of industrial diamonds to Germany. "We sneaked across the Bay of Biscay in a plane which had no parachutes. A German fighter shadowed us all the way."

Tours by royalty at the B.I.F. have become a tradition since Queen Mary inspected the first Fair in 1915. Before the war, the royal party used to enter and leave by different doors. There was only one red carpet, which had to be rolled up the moment the visitors stepped off it and was rushed round to the exit together with massed arrays of hydrangeas and bulbs. Nowadays, itineraries are planned to end at their starting points.

Mishaps During Royal Tours

Elaborate preparations are made for royal inspections, but mishaps sometimes occur. Last year, when escorting the Queen Mother around Olympia, Reading pressed a button to summon a lift. When the lift arrived, the doors opened to reveal a workman carrying a mop and pail. At first the man was overwhelmed with embarrassment, but in an effort to save the situation he snapped smartly to attention and marched briskly off.

Another anxious moment for Reading was when he acted as guide to the Duchess of Kent. They entered a lift to go to the first floor. "The lift operator was in a state of nervous excitement," he says. "We overshot the first floor and went on up to the second. Watched by the white-faced members of a reception committee on the first floor, who obviously thought that the plans had been suddenly changed, the lift came down—but again missed the mark and returned to ground level. At the third attempt we made it."

To show buyers round the Fair, Reading engages interpreters skilled in twenty-three languages. One native chieftain wanted a two-ton printing press, but insisted that it should be dismantled so that bearers could carry it to an assembly point in Central Africa. Another African took some large lumps of twisted iron to a slot machine maker's stand and asked if machines could be made to fit them. "This is our currency," he explained.

One strange request came from a New Zealander who wanted an emulsion suitable for photographing ghosts. On another occasion, a New York woman asked for a stethoscope which she could hold to the wall. She wanted to listen to her neighbours' conversation. THE END

Lizzie gave a little whinny of fright. Coaxing her towards the struggling figure, he said: "We've got to, old girl. It's his only chance!"

A lady called Lizzie

by ***DUDLEY HOYS***

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES WOOD

The boy loved her, old and useless as she was. How could they be so cruel as to end her life?

THE OLD BAY MARE led an easy life. Twenty-three years old, blind in the left eye, and beginning to get filmy in the right, she spent most of her days browsing among the small dale fields and intakes of Whinholme farm. It was rarely she did any work, such as hauling the muck-cart or the side-delivery rake. The tractor tackled these jobs more easily, and saved time.

Yet, despite her age, on occasion she still showed a hint of the lish, as we say in these parts. She would kick her heels up high, and buck, and go cantering across the grass in a springy fashion, pretending to be young and skittish. And whenever Ted Brown appeared, she careered over to him, whinnying, and shoved her muzzle into his hand for the expected titbit.

She would follow him as he worked, and he would talk to her.

"Reckon you're a lazy old devil, Lizzie. Nowt to do but eat and sleep." He told her, affectionately, that she was a great, idle brute, that a tractor was worth twelve of her. "Ay, think of that, Lizzie, you feckless old woman."

Ted was sixteen, a tall lad, inclined to have outgrown his strength, fresh-faced, brown-eyed, and with a kindly, sensitive mouth. Since leaving school he had been working for John Curwen and lived in at the farm. It suited his mother, who was a widow and eked out her small means by doing a bit of cleaning for some of the dalesfolk.

When he knocked off work, he and Lizzie had a routine.

"Come on," he would cry at her. "What price the Grand National?" And then he would curve his wrists over her withers, take a flying leap, and land astraddle. She would canter briskly for the gateway. Both of them looked forward to that bucketing ride.

After dinner in the kitchen, one day, John Curwen said, "I'll not be turning the ewes into Home Field this back end. You can lead muck there this afternoon."

Ted nodded.

"Take Lizzie and the cart. I'll be needing the tractor." He turned to his wife, who was stout and shrewd. "They're building on to the kennels. I promised I'll take tractor and cart stones."

Mrs. Curwen smiled. "You and your Hunt!"

There was a twinkle in Curwen's rather hard blue eyes. "Ay, if I had to choose between you and the Hunt, 'twould be a problem."

"Like enough," she said, amused.

Ted got up from the table. Curwen followed him out into the stackyard, to collect the tractor.

Glancing across the road towards Tup Close, he said: "It's quite a while since Lizzie did owt but graze." He paused. "Well, 'tis likely this muck-carting will be the last job she'll do."

Ted stared at him, puzzled. "Last job?"

"She's got beyond things. She'll have to be put down."

The walls of Ted's throat seemed to squeeze

Continued on page 25

Gourmet who blends good taste into wine

by KEITH ELLIS

With test-tubes, skill, and faith in Australia's vineyards Melville Bell fights snobbery about the label on the bottle

ADELAIDE, Australia

AS HEAD WINEMAKER of a firm which produces more wine than any other manufacturer in Australia, Melville Bell was worried by complaints from customers that an Australian sherry they had bought recently was sweeter than usual. Bell sent for a sample to the cellar at Seppeltsfield in the Barossa Valley. In his laboratories, he analysed it, found that the sugar content was higher than it should be, and then began an investigation. This revealed that one of the cellarmen had been on holiday and that his deputy had added too much sweetening agent.

About a hundred dozen bottles had escaped on to the market before the mistake could be rectified —which Bell found particularly upsetting because of the established competition from Europe that his products have to face. "We can't compete with the very best wines of France," says Bell, "but we maintain that our commercial lines—and those are what most people drink—are at least as good as theirs."

Fifty-two year old Bell is technically responsible for the 3,500,000 gallons of wine produced annually at Seppelt's six South Australia and Victoria wineries. With his small laboratory staff he ensures that the taste, smell and chemical composition of almost one-tenth of Australia's total wine production conforms to the standards he has developed. "Half our wine is distilled into brandy or grape spirit for fortifying wines such as port and sherry," he says. The rest consists of ports, sherries, white and red table wines, vermouths, liqueurs and champagne.

Bell recently had cause for considerable pride. For the Royal banquet at Canberra, one of the highlights of the Royal visit, wines to accompany each course were chosen "blind" by four independent experts from samples submitted by Australia's leading winemakers. When the judges announced their decision, it was found that three of the six chosen had passed through Bell's laboratory.

Australian Brandy Triumphed

Like most Australian wine men, he was wrily amused by a recent incident in London which started when Constance Cummings, in the West End play *Trial and Error*, told her stage husband: "It's because you have such a sense of the fitness of things. It's because you don't drink Australian brandy." The aspersion soon reached the ears of Sir Thomas White, Australian High Commissioner in London. He arranged a blind tasting of eleven brandies, nine French and two Australian—for Miss Cummings, Derek Farr, who also acted in the play, and Kenneth Horne, the author.

Both Farr and Horne tasted all eleven and gave their opinion that an Australian brand was best. After nosing them all and tasting five of them Miss Cummings agreed. Horne cut the offending line from his play.

Said Colin McKay, representative of the Australian Wine Board in London: "This vindicates Australian brandy and proves that our biggest handicap in selling it abroad is overcoming unfounded snobbery over labels."

As the grapes ripen, samples are sent to Bell for analysis. If acidity and sugar content are correct, he gives the word to begin harvesting

Each year, more than three million gallons of six months, he compares his products with his

Apart from two thousand acres of their own vineyards scattered over South Australia and Victoria, the Seppelt wineries buy from more than six hundred growers in the Barossa Valley. The vineyards grow in such a variety of soils, climate and height that between them they produce the grapes for every type of wine, liqueur and brandy. "They're mostly small, around thirty acres," says Bell. "Their owners may also have a job in the winery."

Just before the vintage, which usually lasts from the end of February to the end of April, Bell prepares a list of the quantities of the different types of wine he will need. At the same time, he sends to grape-growers a questionnaire asking how many grapes they will have available. As the grapes ripen, the growers send further samples to him. "We test these for acidity and sugar content," he says. "We can then tell the growers when to pick or—if they're too early—to send further samples." When the grapes arrive at the winery they are weighed and carted to the fermenting tanks.

"Many years ago," says Bell, "we used to have 'no admittance' written over the doorways. Nowadays, we don't exactly have 'Welcome' on the mat, but we're happy to see visitors." To cope with the flow, two attractive office girls, Maureen Schultz and Joan Mewitt, spend much of their time working as guides. In two and a half years, Maureen reckons she has been round the winery a thousand times. Sample drinks for visitors cost the firm about £2,500 a year.

To avoid the long climb to the fermenting tanks in the searing heat, Joan Mewitt usually joins the visitors' bus at the bottom of the hill and rides with them to the top. There she points out where the lorries tip their grapes into giant crushers which strip away the leaves and stalks.

Joan shows the visitors how the juice of Riesling and Pinot Blanc grapes, from which hock is

wine depend for their quality on Bell in his laboratory. Every competitors' wines—without seeing the labels on the bottles

"We don't exactly have 'welcome' on the door," says Bell, "but we're happy to see visitors." And the sightseers cost his firm £2,500 a year in sample tots of wine

made, is separated immediately from the skins and pumped into two-thousand gallon tanks, where it is fermented by yeast. In this way, a light, dry wine is produced.

To get the colour and astringency of a claret or burgundy, black-skinned grapes such as Hermitage, Mataro and Cabernet Savignon are crushed and pumped into the fermenting tanks, juice and skins together. "The colour comes from the skins," says Bell. "The longer you leave the juice in contact with the skin, the darker the wine." Three days later the juice, now a rich red, is pumped out and allowed to continue its fermentation in another tank.

After fermentation, table wines stand for three weeks so that impurities may settle. The clear wine is then drawn off and refined. After being matured for two or three years it is ready for the market.

No Cobwebs In The Cellars

In defiance of the popular idea that wine-cellars must be festooned with cobwebs and crawling with spiders, Bell keeps his stores immaculately clean. When he does come across a stray cobweb he says: "We imported that from France."

Ports, sherries and other fortified wines are fermented from special grapes. All except sherries have their fermentation arrested before the yeast has consumed all the sugar, by the addition of grape spirit, a form of highly purified alcohol distilled from wine. Thus, the wine retains a portion of its sweetness. Sherries, however, are allowed to ferment completely before the grape spirit is added. A part of it is then contaminated with a white mould, imported from Spain, which gives the wine its characteristic flavour. "It is the current fashion for people to drink dry sherry," says Bell, "and at one time we used to sell our sherry absolutely dry. We soon found that though people liked to drink something labelled 'dry,' they preferred the wine inside the bottle to be a little sweeter. We began to make our sherries sweeter and the sales rose correspondingly."

After the grape spirit has been added, sherries and ports are matured for at least two years in sixty-gallon oak casks stored under an iron roof exposed to the sun. The wine evaporates during its long maturing, and every year fifty thousand gallons are lost. "The store is bonded and we can't claim an excise rebate for the evaporated wine."

When a batch of wine is judged to be mature, Bell blends it with other batches and bottles it. A typical twenty thousand gallon lot of sherry sold in late 1953 consisted of ten different wines ranging from 1944 to 1950. "We can always conform to our standards," says Bell. "Even if we run short of one constituent, by varying the proportions of the other nine we can make it up. Each batch is tested in the laboratory, but the final test must always be by taste."

Over the years Bell has developed a highly discriminating nose and palate. "It gives me an advantage over the other beer-drinkers in the pub," he says. "I can always tell when the beer is off. I can also tell my wife when the heat has turned the milk and butter."

Every six months, he buys a complete range of competing Australian wines and the best foreign wines. A few drops of each are poured into tasting glasses, and he and his assistants compare them without looking at the labels on the bottles.

Bell owes much of his wine knowledge to Oscar Seppelt, managing director of the firm when he joined it in 1926. Bell and his brother farmed a piece of land on the River Murray, but when the depression came the income was not sufficient to support them both. On the strength of his diploma from an agricultural college he took a job at Seppelt's as a laboratory assistant. When the wine blender died, Bell took his place.

Each morning Oscar Seppelt joined him in a tasting session. Oscar, now retired, is the grandson of the original Seppelt, Joseph, a Silesian tobacco manufacturer who emigrated to the Barossa Valley more than a hundred years ago and, finding the tobacco he grew there of poor quality, turned instead to vines. His son Benno succeeded him. Oscar, eldest of Benno's sons, is largely responsible for its growth.

Unlike Emu and Burgoyne's, which export almost all their wine to Britain or the British Commonwealth, Seppelt's sell the bulk of their wine in Australia. "We don't rely on exports for a living," says Bell, "because the stroke of a pen can raise a tariff and destroy our livelihood."

Search For The Perfect Vine

Since the Australian wine industry, though more than a hundred years old, is new by European standards, Bell believes that it has much to learn. He chooses two varieties of vine which have a desirable characteristic—one may be a heavy bearer, the other notable for the quality of its grape—and cross-fertilizes them by brushing the female flowers of one with pollen from the male flowers of the other. "Over the last five years we've made about five hundred experiments. We haven't created any worthwhile varieties yet—but then, we're pioneers."

While Bell and others like him are striving to improve a product which is already sound they still have to overcome consumers' preference for European wines.

It was to break down the English attitude to Australian wine that John Seppelt, sales and advertising manager and one of seven Seppelts at present actively engaged in the business, visited England in 1950.

"In one book on wine," he says. "I found exactly three lines devoted to Australian wines. And in those three lines was the remark: 'Australian champagne is excellent—for launching battleships.'"

THE END

BHOWANI JUNCTION

by JOHN MASTERS

ILLUSTRATED BY WILLIAM LITTLE

I felt physically sick. The bodies, the pain. . . . How could men plot this horror? And how could I call them my friends?

MY FRIENDS AND FAMILY had turned against me. In the India of 1946, with racial feelings running high as the British prepared to leave, it "wasn't done" for an Anglo-Indian girl to go to a cinema with a Sikh.

My name is Victoria Jones: I have mixed British and Indian blood. I knew that we Anglo-Indians had to make up our minds where we belonged—to Britain, or to India. The Sikh, Ranjit Kasel, was a civilian railway clerk at Bhowani Junction. I was on the staff of Colonel Rodney Savage, whose Gurkha battalion was patrolling the line against terrorists.

Ranjit loved me—timidly, silently; and he knew something terrible about me. He knew that I had killed Lieutenant Macaulay, Savage's adjutant—in self-defence against his brutal advances. I had sheltered at Ranjit's home, and his mother, Sirdarni Kasel, had made me change out of my bloodstained army shirt into a sari.

That sari did something to me. It made me beautiful—and Indian. I felt myself being drawn, dangerously, into anti-British politics. Ranjit's mother was said to be in touch with followers of K. P. Roy, a fanatical terrorist. At her house I had seen a man called Ghanshyam, who was wanted by the police. . . .

I had been brought up to like and admire Englishmen, but Colonel Savage baffled me. He instinctively sensed the problem that tore me apart—that I was working for the British, while sympathizing with the Indians. He seemed to like me, and yet he lost no opportunity of humiliating me—especially about Ranjit.

The climax came, ironically, at the Empire Day Social. The Anglo-Indians ostracized me: I had no dancing partners. Patrick Taylor, an Anglo-Indian railway official whom I had nearly married—we had quarrelled over his intolerance of people like Ranjit, whom he called "wogs"—jeered at me. "Nobody wants to dance with you!" he shouted. "Nobody!" Savage was there, too—aloof, sardonic. He merely laughed.

It was a bitter moment—yet I was curiously relieved. I knew now which side I was on. I walked out, went straight to Ranjit's home. From now on I wanted to wear the sari—always.

PART 4

Victoria Takes The Sari

RANJIT stared at me. We were standing in the doorway, and I asked if I could come in for a minute. He said: "Oh yes, please. I am sorry."

He followed me up the stairs. On the way he said: "My mother is out. There is only Mr. Surabhai and myself here." Mr. Surabhai was chairman of the local Congress Party committee.

Ranjit opened the door of the big room for me and stood aside.

Mr. Surabhai got up hurriedly, holding a small cake in his hand. Plaster in the shape of a big X on his forehead made him look like a cartoon of a man who has been in a fight.

Ranjit said: "Miss Jones wanted my mother to help her buy some saris."

Mr. Surabhai, whose expression had been dejected and hang-dog, came to me with both his arms outstretched. He cried: "Miss Jones! That is quite wonderful. You have genuinely decided to don the national garb? Oh, I say, this is grand!" He clasped my hands in his, popping the cake into his mouth just in time, and squeezed my fingers hard. With his mouth full, he cried: "Don't think of waiting for one minute! Strike when the iron is hot, that's it. Eh?"

THEN, suddenly, he became serious. "I was wounded! See?" He leaned forward, showing me the plaster cross. He was lucky it was not a lot worse—and that Savage and his Gurkhas were there when the processions clashed.

"I saw it all, Mr. Surabhai," I said.

"You did?" he said. He deflated as he remembered what a disastrous misunderstanding it had really been. As suddenly he cheered up, and said: "The police put it up to the Moslems, that's what. They had their *agents provocateurs* in the crowd and were just awaiting their chance. A fine chance they had, too, my word! It was a jolly disgraceful shame after all the Sirdarni-sahiba's good efforts." He shook his head.

I sat down. Ranjit poured me some lemonade, and I drank thirstily while Mr. Surabhai described the procession in minute detail.

When he came to the end of the story he said: "You must cease to be a member of the Women's Auxiliary Corps, Miss Jones. It is your patriotic duty. Oh, I dare not blame you for joining the corps when the war was in full swing. Hitler and Hirohito undoubtedly needed conquering. But now the military are fighting nobody but us. Why, what would you think if you were compelled to shoot me?"

"Wacs don't usually carry arms, Mr. Surabhai," I said. "And, anyway, I wouldn't shoot you."

Mr. Surabhai's eyes popped, and he leaned over me, showering cake crumbs into my lap. He said: "Ah, but what if I was in the act of exploding a train? Blowing a bridge to fragments? What then, eh?"

I said: "You wouldn't blow up a train, Mr. Surabhai, would you?" Even the thought of it made me serious, and I said: "That isn't going to get rid of the British any quicker. All it will do is kill people like my father and lots of Indian passengers."

Savage gripped my shoulder, and ordered me to

Mr. Surabhai said: "Ah, but what if it was a troop train full of British soldiers and no one else besides? What then, eh? There will be a driver, two firemen and a guard, naturally, but you can't make omelettes without breaking the eggs, eh? Though, of course, I would not think for one second of blowing up Mr. Jones. Absolutely not for one fraction of a second! But the principle is just. There is no help for it. It is the truth, so help us God."

Ranjit said: "Victoria, I think if you want a sari tonight you had better come out now. Singh usually goes to bed at about this time."

Mr. Surabhai looked at his wristwatch, shook it, and looked again. "My goodness me, do you know it is seven minutes past eleven p.m.?" he cried.

"Yes," Ranjit said, dropping into Hindi, "I know. You would talk till five in the morning if I let you, wouldn't you? You'd better get home now or you'll be in trouble."

"I am afraid you are quite correct," Mr. Surabhai answered in English. "I must hurry to my home or Mrs. Surabhai will give me six bells and all kinds of assorted hades." He went

in the rescue. "I won't," I said. "I didn't do this!" He shouted again: "Go and help the poor devils who've been hurt. They didn't do it, either!"

out, gesturing with joined palms towards each of us, and we heard his light shoes hop-hopping down the long staircase.

A minute later I followed with Ranjit. This time I felt very conspicuous in my white organdie evening dress, and was glad the little shop was near. Har Singh lay comfortably stretched out there on several bolts of cloth, fast asleep, but the lamp was still burning above him, and the door was not locked.

I BOUGHT two khaki saris for uniform, three white ones for daytime, and two beautiful evening saris, one black and one of pale blue silk. I bought plain borders for the white saris, a gold border for the black sari, and a silver border for the blue one. Har Singh stitched a border on to one plain white sari right away. The others I would do the next day, at home.

I put on the sari and waited while Har Singh fastened the rest and my organdie into a big bundle. When we got outside, Ranjit looked anxiously up and down for a tonga—a two-wheeled pony trap. We waited for some time, but none came. It was about midnight.

It was a lovely night, and a little cooler by then. There was a breeze. I asked Ranjit if he would mind walking home with me.

He smiled at me then, really smiled, and said: "I was hoping you would suggest that. Are those shoes all right for walking?"

I said: "They're comfortable, but I can't walk fast. Let's walk down the line from the loco sheds."

We didn't say much until we had climbed the low embankment by the loco sheds and turned up the main line. It was late by then, but someone in the sheds had a wireless set and must have been squatting in the dark listening to music among the big quiet engines.

"Patna, I think," Ranjit said. "That is a Bihar love song. It is quite well known."

"Let's stop and listen a minute," I said. "We can sit on the fence. I want to rest my feet. I have an awful lot to learn."

"About the music?" he said.

I said: "Yes. That, and everything. I am ready to like the music, if you know what I mean, but it doesn't make sense to me. I have heard it all my life and I've never really listened to it or tried to understand it."

Ranjit lowered my bundle carefully to the ground. He said softly: "I cannot explain to you how glad I am about the sari, Victoria."

I said: "You didn't look very pleased when I told you. You looked more frightened." I examined him carefully. I could not see his face well, but I thought he was pleased and also nervous. I wondered if he was nervous because he was screwing up his courage to kiss me. What would I do then?

But he wouldn't, he wasn't going to, I was absolutely certain of it.

He said: "I am so pleased, but I am worried, too. You know what happened at the cantonment cinema. I think something else must have happened like it tonight?"

I said: "Something happened—but I don't want to talk about that. Let's get on." I didn't want to tell him what happened at the dance; it would only worry him more.

HE picked up the parcel. We walked side by side between the rails, keeping step on the sleepers. He said: "You will never regret this. India will open up like a flower when she is free, Victoria. We will all share in her beauty and happiness. India will sing like a bird out of its cage when she is free."

I pressed his arm. It was strange to know I could do it and not be misunderstood—never with any other man in my life. I said: "I know. It'll be wonderful for you personally, too, won't it?"

I meant he would feel that the railway was truly India's, that he would be working at his own job for his own country, without despising

I was trying to be calm and reasonable, but it wasn't easy. Pater's voice rose and he banged the arm of the chair. "What is the matter with you, girl? Do you hate us, all of a sudden?"

himself half the time as a servant of the British.

He said: "It will be wonderful. I will go into politics. There is need of a new outlook. Congress has been very good in many ways, but it is too much controlled by the Bombay capitalists and the steel millionaires. I want to work on the educational programmes."

I said: "Don't you want to stay on the railways?" I was surprised and perhaps a little shocked to hear what he said.

He was becoming less constrained with me. He swung the parcel on its strings as he walked, and waved his other hand in the air to emphasize what he said. "The railway is merely a mechanical thing. It takes our bodies from one place to another. It is material. But the mind, the soul, is what is important to India."

We were at the signal and it was off, for Number 599 Down Passenger, nearly an hour late. I stopped there because that was where we would have to say good night.

Ranjit's hand came out slowly, as though someone invisible behind him was forcing his elbow forward. He took my hand and squeezed it. He said, stammering and more nervous than I had ever seen a man with me: "Miss Jones—Victoria, I am getting—I admire you more than —I think you are the bravest girl in the world. Please don't think I am pushing you."

He was perspiring freely, and his hand was clammy. He looked the same as he had the night Macaulay was killed. He burst out: "I don't want to hurry you, Victoria."

"Then why do you?" I said as gently as I could. I held his hand, instead of his holding mine, and said: "I like you, too, Ranjit, very much. I think you are the nicest man I've ever met. I think—I think this may be too valuable to hurry. Don't forget how strange everything is to me—even the music."

I finished with a laugh and let his hand go, and stood back from him. Far away I saw the bright little eye of the train as it came on down towards us.

My words seemed to have opened a gate for Ranjit. Still keeping well apart from me he cried: "I am honourably in love with you, Victoria. I didn't want to say it yet. I wanted you to have time to know me. And I am afraid of you. I am afraid for your sake as well. But——"

I waited, knowing what must be coming.

He said miserably: "But you have said you are going to think of yourself as an Indian. My mother—" I sighed. Here it was. "My mother told me to hurry up or you would marry someone else. She told me that if I didn't make up your mind for you, she would."

I was wearing a sari, and I did understand. Girls who wore saris had their marriages arranged for them. Everything should have been settled for me long ago, before I knew what it was about, years before I was twenty-eight. The light of the train was bright in my eyes, and the earth shook under it as it came on.

I said: "I don't want to hurry, even for your mother, Ranjit. I'd rather you asked me." I was ready to cry of vexation. Here I was, so proud of my new sari, and this was what happened the first time I wore it. I felt as if I were insisting on wearing a topi on top of it.

He muttered: "I will not know how to ask you."

I said: "Well, I will ask you—when I want to!"

I had to put out my arm and pull him away from the line as 599 Down Passenger rocked past. Dear Ranjit was not really a railwayman at heart, or he would have felt that train in his bones even though he had his back to it—even if I had been promising to marry him.

I STRUGGLED out of sleep, miles down. My sister was knocking on the wall between our rooms. There was another noise—the telephone ringing, holding its tongue, ringing. Rose Mary's muffled, sleepy voice called: "For heaven's sake go and answer it, Vicky. It's always for you."

I scrambled out of the sheet and the mosquito net and found the light. I stood by the telephone, one hand on the wall and my eyes closed against the light, and lifted the receiver. I thought dazedly it would be something to do with the mutiny. But the mutiny was over at last, and the sailors had gone back peacefully to their duty.

The man said: "Duty Officer, First Thirteenth Gurkhas. The C.O. wants you to get into uniform at once. A jeep will come and pick you up in ten minutes. There's been a crash, a troop train derailed near Pathoda."

I woke up properly and said: "What does he want me for?"

The duty officer said: "Good God, I don't know, but you'd better hurry up. I've got a hundred things to do. Goodbye." He hung up.

I went back to my room and began to dress. When I was stepping into my skirt I remembered that I had been wearing a sari since yesterday. I muttered crossly to myself, took off my skirt, and found my uniform sari.

The jeep arrived before I was quite ready. I found my watch, saw it was two o'clock, and hurried out.

Birkhe, Savage's young Gurkha orderly, was waiting, and I scrambled in beside him. The sari took some managing. I had always wondered how the Indian girls in the WAC (I) managed to ride bicycles and get in and out of jeeps and do their parade-ground drills so efficiently.

Birkhe smiled shyly at me, his beautiful white teeth gleaming in the faint starlight, but he did not speak then or on the short drive up the Pike. The battalion offices were alive with lights and men and the sound of talking and the throb of engines.

Savage called me at once and said: "Ranjit's at the Traffic Office now, and Taylor's on his way there. Find out at once what they're doing. Tell

Continued on page 26

Dickson treats about fifteen people a day, but some need coaxing to attend his surgery. One man wanted to motor-cycle to hospital—with a broken collar bone

Not all Dickson's cases are on firm ground. As he bandaged a casualty on a 150-foot crane, both men nearly fell off

First-aid Dickson runs an obstacle race

by JACK ATACK

In and out of dockland's hazardous clutter, Harley Dickson races to the rescue. One of his biggest tasks is saving casualties from their friends

EARLY IN MARCH, 1953, Harley Dickson was called out with his ambulance driver to No. 4 boathouse at Portsmouth Dockyard, where a joiner had fallen off a ladder. They had gone some way through a clutter of marine gear, passing cranes, derricks and floating docks, when "Snowy" Luck, the ambulance driver, noticed that the caisson which carried the road across the water was out of place. He drove on, only to find a second caisson not in place. A third route was blocked by coils of electric cable and water hoses, and a fourth by a travelling crane.

With no further time to lose, Dickson climbed out and ordered the crane to be moved. When the ambulance finally drew up at the boathouse, he pushed his way through the crowd to the injured man—and found him suffering from nothing more serious than a sprained ankle.

For Dickson, an energetic, thirty-three year old Lancastrian, the experience was frustrating but not unusual. In covering twenty square miles of waterfront as a surgery assistant employed in casualty work in Her Majesty's Dockyard at Portsmouth, he frequently completes a grim obstacle race—to find that the patient is only slightly injured.

Occasionally, because of the dangers of work in the dockyard, he finds men in serious trouble. When a welder, who was repairing the bottom of a pontoon, failed to reappear one day, his mate went down after him. Neither of them reappeared, and by the time Dickson arrived they had been missing for a quarter of an hour. He climbed in with an air hose and called out in the darkness—but there was no answer. Then he kicked against the body of one man and found the second close by. Dickson called for assistance to lift the unconscious men to the pontoon deck.

"There was no air down in that compartment," he says. "The only exit was a manhole at the top, and in their condition the men were too exhausted to climb the ladder to it. Another few minutes and it would have been too late."

When a ship docks for repairs at Portsmouth, electricians, welders, riveters, painters, fumigators and other workmen swarm over it. Two hundred men may be working in a ship at one time, installing anything from a small fan to a main set of engines. In the two to three months it takes to re-fit a ship, painters may be overcome by fumes in the hull, joiners spraying hot tar on planks may be burned by the splash, welders can fall off staging and plunge into the harbour, and pieces of machinery and tools can drop from scaffolding and crush men's limbs.

To combat such mishaps, thirty surgery assistants—eight of them on casualty work—are engaged in the dockyards at Chatham, Rosyth, Devonport and Portsmouth. Dickson's area takes in boathouses, jetties, dry docks, storehouses, offices and apprentice shops. He treats injuries ranging from bruised fingers to fractured ribs, and last year alone stitched up more than five hundred people and gave more than 150 local anaesthetics. With eight other surgery assistants, he shares a surgery as fully equipped as the casualty wing of a large modern hospital.

A brown-eyed, fair-haired hustler, toughened by fifteen years of casualty work, Dickson has dealt with thousands of cases. On an average he rescues six people a week, many of them from such tricky positions that he has to take chances to reach them. One day last September he was called to a painter who was lying precariously

JOHN BULL PHOTOGRAPHS BY WILLIAM KEMP

"HAVE A HAMMERTON FOR ZEST"

Hammerton Oatmeal Stout

A WATNEY BREW

with a badly crushed leg on a narrow catwalk at the top of a crane 150 feet high. The man's leg hung limply over one side of the catwalk and his head and shoulders over the other.

Dickson approached cautiously, taking care not to slip on the fresh paint. A gale was blowing and the wind snatched bandages from his hand as fast as he unrolled them. Several times the injured man almost sent them both flying as he writhed in pain. After an hour and twenty minutes he was lowered by block and tackle and Dickson scrambled down.

Dickson's work is frequently complicated by the crowds that gather round an injured man. "They are usually as shocked as the victim," he says. "Tempers run high and it isn't easy to convince them that you know what you're doing."

Men's Misguided Help

When he was summoned to a welder who had fallen fifteen feet from a ladder and fractured his back, Dickson found that the man's workmates had thrown their arms round him and were trying to help him to his feet. "They were certain that a cup of tea would cure him, and I had to get rough before I made any impression on them."

Often, Dickson has to use all his powers of persuasion with the injured as well as with onlookers. Many of his patients are hardened seamen whom he has to coax to the surgery. One man who had cut himself badly walked into the casualty room and said grudgingly: "If you want to treat me now, you can. But I won't force you." Another man with a broken collar bone wanted to ride his motor cycle to the city hospital. But a sixteen-stone docker who came in with a sprained thumb was so upset at the sight of a colleague's lacerated arm that he fainted.

The annual Navy Week provides Dickson with a great variety of employment. With the yards open to the public, sightseers trip over rails, collapse from exhaustion and fall down gangways. Hundreds have been treated by Dickson in a week. Normally, he gets as many as fifteen calls daily and on a recent Friday he treated seventy casualties.

Between calls, Dickson keeps busy by checking equipment in his section of the eight-roomed surgery. He sees that his first-aid kit is fully stocked with bandages, lint, cotton-wool, smelling salts, burn ointment, tourniquets and surgical scissors. He tests the resuscitation apparatus regularly.

In addition to all this, complete records are kept of casualties in case of subsequent compensation claims as well as to ensure medical consistency. "A man may claim for an injury sustained twenty years before," says surgery assistant Charles Donahue.

In Dickson's time almost every known type of accident has occurred in the yards. To get the injured clear, he has used winches, cranes, specially designed stretchers and ropes. In some emergencies he has utilized ship's planking for stretchers, has cracked broom handles for splints and even torn off part of his own clothing for bandages. To free an apprentice trapped while repairing a lift, an assistant once sent for a gang of welders who cut away the lift sides with oxy-acetylene torches.

Recently, Dickson went to one of the boathouses, where a man had dropped twelve feet from the deck of a boat into the launching pit. After strapping him to a stretcher, Dickson was helping to carry him away when he saw that there was not enough room to get the stretcher out. He asked the driver of a travelling crane which runs across the shed ceiling for help. A hook was lowered, and the victim was hoisted clear of the obstruction, then lowered on the other side.

Though their main area is within the dockyard, Dickson and his colleagues sometimes have to travel considerable distances. Tugmasters in the harbour have summoned them to sick crewmen, and once Bob Bardsley was sent to a ship seven miles at sea to treat an engineer who had been taken ill.

"It was a tricky business," says Bardsley. "We had to lower him into a small craft as it pitched and rolled in mountainous waves." Bad weather often holds up first-aid work. In winter the dockyards are like an ice-rink, and one morning Dickson attended to thirty cyclists involved in skids and collisions in the fog.

Treatment With A Joke

To qualify as a dockyard surgery assistant, an applicant must have spent some part of his career nursing in a naval hospital and has to pass written and oral tests. Experience aboard ship is also useful, as it enables first-aid men to talk to sailors in their own language—"a great asset," says Dickson, "when you are told that a man has been hurt on the starboard side of the engine-room." Assistants are also required to radiate confidence. Dickson has sometimes been able to reduce shock merely by joking, and has avoided medical complications by taking a strong line with over-eager rescuers, as on the occasion when he forbade a crane driver to hoist a badly injured workman too quickly.

Tact and patience are other useful assets. When a housewife saw the ambulance draw up outside her home, she rushed down the front steps screaming. Dickson, Luck and their patient, the woman's husband, who had only slight bruises, entered the house and had to treat the woman for shock.

Nowadays, when taking a patient home Dickson invariably orders "Snowy" Luck to park the ambulance out of sight. THE END

A LADY CALLED LIZZIE

Continued from page 17

dryly together. He swallowed hard, and burst out: "No you can't! You mustn't!"

Curwen eyed him in surprise. "What's wrong with you, lad?"

"Oh, please don't put her down! She's—she's still——"

Curwen said gruffly but kindly: "Listen, Ted. She's had her day. She's been a good old horse, but it's no use keeping her now. Blind in one eye, and t'other failing. She's better put down."

Ted's hands were plucking at one another. His mouth was trembling. He said: "But what harm is she doing? Can't you let her go on grazing till she dies natural-like?" He was a little afraid of Curwen, but his affection for Lizzie gave him the courage to go on arguing and pleading.

He went on desperately, "She's in good fettle. She can still do odd jobs like muck-carting. She's no trouble. She——"

Curwen said: "You're fond of her. Ay, I know. But you'll never make a farmer if you get over fond of any beast." He slapped Ted on the shoulder with a sort of good-tempered raillery. "You'd never part with a cow or a sheep. And where would you land up, farming like that?"

"But this is different," said Ted beseechingly. "Besides, while Lizzie's alive, now and then she can do something for us. What use is she dead?"

"She'll be mighty useful at the kennels."

Ted sucked in a horrified breath. "You're not——?"

Curwen said: "Have some sense. Hounds need meat, and I've told the committee that when Lizzie's put down, they can have her."

Ted stood dumb and appalled. Curwen gave a tiny, impatient laugh. Yet, underneath it, was a hint of compassion for the lad's distress.

"You must be sensible, Ted. Once Lizzie's gone, she's gone. Whether she's buried in a field, or fed to hounds, where's the odds?"

Ted's words were sick and jerky. "Lizzie—to be eaten—by dogs." And then he had a sudden thought. "Will you sell her to me?"

Curwen stared at him. "Sell her to you? Where would you graze her? Turn her on fells to starve in winter?" Once more he patted Ted's shoulder. "No, lad. You must look facts in the face. Lizzie's had her day. A quick bullet, and she'll know nowt."

Ted said huskily: "When are you going to take her away?"

Curwen hesitated. "Likely 'twill be Thursday next."

TED turned away, furious with himself for having tears in his eyes. He went to fetch Lizzie for harnessing to the muck-cart.

She whinnied, and nuzzled his hand for the biscuit in his palm. He ran his hands over her warm, satiny cheeks, and had a hard job not to burst out crying.

He bit his lip, and said fiercely: "Come on, you old woman. There's work to do."

There was more rain in the offing, a sepia blanket gathering about the fells to the north-west, but just now a November sun gave a sheen to the grass and a glitter to the swollen river. Lizzie plodded along with a slow rhythm, stopping every seven yards as the boy hauled with the drag and built up on the ground a pile of muck weighing a hundredweight and a half. So often had she done this job in the past, it was instinct in her. She stopped, went on, and stopped of her own accord.

Trudging at the side of the cart, Ted kept watching the ripple of Lizzie's bay curves, and picturing her a week hence, standing foursquare, her face placid, and the barrel of a gun pointing at that spot above the eyes. Would she know what was going to happen?

He winced, and tried to blot the picture out of his mind. Perhaps, if he said no more today, and started to plead again tomorrow, he might persuade the boss to think differently.

He was wrong. Curwen silenced him with a few curt words, and afterwards said to his wife: "Yon Ted's that soft-hearted, he's making a fool of himself."

To Ted, there was something dreadful about the way that week rushed past.

On the Sunday, Curwen told him to move the mare into the top intake behind the farmhouse. The dale fields would be wanted for the ewes, to be gathered next day and brought down to the rams, waiting chained in pairs and irritably eager.

He rode her up to the intake, where the grazing was poor, sneaked back to the corn bin reserved for the hens, and returned with a piled bucket. While she nuzzled and champed, he stood with his arm round her neck. His brain was juggling with some wild idea of trying to save her by turning her loose on the open fells.

Then he shook his head drearily. It would be no use at all. Twenty-one of her twenty-three years she had spent on the farm. Turn her loose up there, and she would soon be back, rubbing herself against the top intake gate and whinnying.

WEDNESDAY morning it rained in torrents until midday. After dinner, Curwen said to Ted: "There's a wall gap at the upper end of the top intake. You can go along and build it up."

Ted nodded. Curwen walked to the kitchen door. Because there was a human streak in his hardness, his next words came out gently. "I'm taking Lizzie along to the kennels tomorrow. Building up the wall gap, you'll be with her."

Ted nodded once more. White-faced, he set off for the intake. Lizzie came lolloping across to him, kicking up her heels, and slid to a stop by the gateway, her muzzle almost laughing. He gave her an apple, and suddenly found he was crying, with his face against her neck, and his hand fondling her mane.

Presently he pulled himself together, and started lifting the stones into the wall gap. From where he stood, well above the farm, he could see the narrow fields below, the ribbon of the dale road, the fields on the other side, and the foaming course of the river.

There was one of the Whinholme rams close to the near bank. On the far bank was a fat ewe. He wondered whether to hurry down and chivvy the ram away. If the ram attempted to cross the Ire it would surely be swept away by that press of water, particularly as the far bank was sheer, and offered no chance of landing except a small shelf just upstream of the falls.

Then he saw Curwen making diagonally across the field towards the ram. He was waving his arms and shouting at it. But the breeding urge was stronger than the impulse to scuttle away in alarm. The ram trotted to the edge of the bank. Curwen broke into a run. The ram entered the water.

Ted, watching, saw Curwen step thigh-deep into the water, and shoot out an arm to grab the ram's fleece. The ram plunged forward. Curwen lost his balance. The next second the ram was being flung downstream in the maelstrom, and Curwen, toppling forward, was snatched by the current and sucked towards the middle.

Ted had let out a futile shout of warning. He saw Curwen being tossed and twirled, helpless as a leaf, the current racing him towards the falls. One of his hands, snatching out above the flurry, gripped the long, overhanging branch of an alder. It dipped with him, and he went right under, and the spring of it drew him up, and then it dipped again, drowning him slowly.

Ted rushed to Lizzie, flung himself on her back, clapped his heels. What he intended to do was dim in his mind, but he had to do something. Curwen was being drowned by inches, even if the branch held. And if it snapped, in a matter of moments the life would be pounded out of his body by the falls.

Lizzie was galloping down the intake, through the open gateway, across the second intake. Ted slid down, flicked up the sneck, leapt on to her and charged across the pasture field. More

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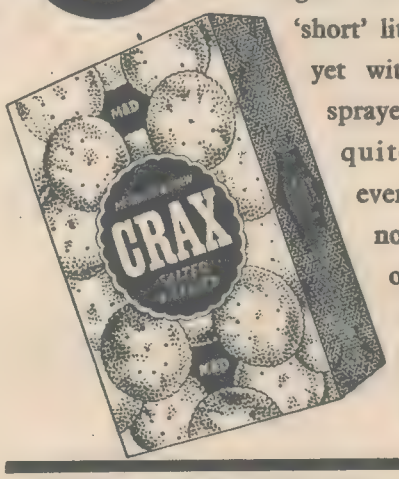

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seconds were lost in opening the gate on to the road. Lizzie's hoofs clattered on its granite surface. Curwen had left the gate on the other side open, and Ted urged Lizzie through it at full gallop. As she neared the river bank, all Ted could do to check her pace was to pull at her throat with his hands. She understood, and slid and floundered to a canter, and stopped on the edge of the bank.

Ted stared at the water, and then his fingers came forward and patted Lizzie's neck.

"We've got to, old girl. It's his only chance. You'll manage. Come on."

Lizzie stepped into the swift, shallow rush above the shingle bank. Her sturdiness resisted the press of it against her thick legs. Head turned a little, she kept straight on. As she entered the depth of the main channel, and the river rose foaming towards her shoulders, she whinnied mildly in fright. Her hind hoofs lost their grip on the shingle bank. She was swimming, and being swung round, head downstream, by the current.

Ted's chest was on her mane. His arms were squeezed around her neck. His left hand was ramming against the blind side of her face.

"Straight, Lizzie! Straight, I tell you! For God's sake! Come round, old girl!"

She did her best. With great strokes of her powerful legs she tried to fight the current. By now she was close to the alder branch, it seemed she would bear down on Curwen and unwittingly kick the remnants of life out of him.

His right arm still clinging to her neck, Ted let himself sway downwards, his left arm stretched low. His fingers met Curwen's wrist and locked around it. In the instant, the drag of Curwen's weight pulled him lower. Pain in his racked right arm stabbed and flared. He felt his hand slipping, and dug into the muscles of Lizzie's neck.

The water buffeted his head, filled his eyes, gushed into his mouth and down his throat. He tried to shout at Lizzie, tried to tell her what to do. She might have understood if he could have got out words. But more water was gushing into his mouth, and up his nose. And the convulsed fingers of his left hand could give her no guide.

Vaguely, just as blackness started to swamp his senses, he had an idea that there was some change in Lizzie's swimming. A kind of jolting might mean that her fore feet were touching bottom. After that, he knew nothing. His hand had lost its hold of her neck, and he was sliding into the dark. . . .

He blinked, and shivered. His skin prickled under the cold discomfort of sodden clothes. Somebody had pulled off his jacket and shirt, and was rubbing him with wet, rough hands. A face loomed close to his own. It was Curwen's.

Ted sat up. He was on a bed of brackens, twenty feet from the river bank. A dripping Curwen was stooping over him.

"We must get you dry and warm soon as possible. Ninestones is the nearest farm this side. We'll be there in five minutes. Can you walk?"

Ted nodded, tried to get to his feet. There was a swishing noise he couldn't understand. Close by, Lizzie was rolling on her back among a stretch of old brackens. She got to her feet, gave herself a shake, whinnied, and started walking towards them.

"You old basket," said Curwen, fondling her ears. "I never thought you'd reach the bank. I never thought I'd see daylight again. And but for you and him, I never would."

He swung round abruptly, picked Ted up, and planked him on Lizzie's back. "You may as well ride her to Ninestones. She's yours, anyway."

"Mine?" said Ted, his eyes alight.

"Ay. And she's welcome to stay in Whinholme fields. 'Tis the least I can do."

Ted's stumbling words of gratitude were cut short by Curwen. "Nay, that's enough," he said awkwardly, and added with a snort: "Yon feckless ram! If it's washed ashore, the hounds can have it. They've got to eat something."

THE END

Consider your verdict

by

RUSSELL SCOTT, LL.B.

FRANK and Irene were married in 1947—in spite of the housing shortage. Frank persuaded Irene that they could live with his parents and, with some misgivings, she agreed.

Frank's parents did their best to interfere as little as possible with the newly-weds but, for some reason, Irene developed a dislike for her in-laws. After three weeks, she had an argument with Frank—and went back to live with her mother.

In spite of Frank's pleadings that she was welcome in his parents' house, she refused to return. He hunted frantically for a house or flat, but in vain.

After a few months, the situation became very strained. From time to time, Frank asked his wife to return. But still she refused.

Then, about eighteen months later, Irene herself found a flat in the centre of the town. She wrote to Frank, asking him to join her there. But Frank had always lived in the suburbs—"I don't like the idea of moving into the town," he told his wife. "And I don't think you should have taken this flat without consulting me."

A day or two after this refusal, Frank received a solicitor's letter claiming that he had deserted Irene and wilfully neglected to maintain her. The next thing was a summons for maintenance.

"She walked out on me in the first place," Frank told the court. "Now she's trying to turn this to her advantage by claiming that it's my duty to live with her in a home of her choosing." He added that he did not like the flat, and that at all times he had provided a home for her at his parents' house. This was still available.

Irene's reply was concise. "It's no satisfaction living with in-laws," she argued. "I found a self-contained flat, and Frank is being unreasonable in refusing to live there. He's found nothing himself." Frank was clearly guilty of deserting her, she said.

What is your verdict? For the legal position, turn to page 28

BHOWANI JUNCTION

Continued from page 22

them Chaney's already gone up with our regimental aid post, and that I'm going in fifteen minutes with Howland and B Company."

I picked up my telephone and began to find out what was happening.

As the urgent instructions and messages piled up, I made notes and with the other ear overheard snatches of Savage's orders next door. I heard him phoning a brigadier at Kishanpur for authority to call on army depots in all surrounding areas.

In a voice with an edge like a saw he said: "Kishanpur three-one-one, priority." There was a short wait. Then Savage snarled: "Say who you are! . . . I don't care a purple—— if your name's Reginald or Ramfurley. Are you the staff captain of Kishanpur Sub-Area? . . . For Pete's sake, wake up, you chairborne swine. This is Savage, C.O. of the First Thirteenth Gurkhas. Take these orders, they are from the brigadier. . . ." He began giving orders in an emphatic monotone.

When he had finished, I went in and told him what I had learned. He was dressed in fighting order. He picked up his hat and carbine and shoved me out to the jeep ahead of him as I struggled to put my information into short, concise phrases.

Birkhe had already moved into the back seat. The radio jeep and the escort jeep were waiting. A line of lorries and six-by-sixes, with lights blazing and engines running, stood along the side of the approach road.

SAVAGE jumped into the driver's seat, engaged gear, and we shot off. I said: "Do you know if many people have been killed, sir?"

Savage said: "The stationmaster thinks so. His first telegram was practically incoherent, Ranjit told me." He hooted at a jackal standing bewildered in the lights, and said: "Yes, it will be a thoroughly unpleasant scene. That sari suits you, by the way, but it's an impractical garment for this kind of life."

The two remarks were not altogether unconnected, I was sure. "It will be a thoroughly unpleasant scene," he said, and he meant: That's why I'm taking you to it, so that you can see with your own eyes what happens when Surabhai's kind of patriotism runs wild. I remembered Mr. Surabhai's justification of train-wrecking and started suddenly in my seat.

Savage stopped the jeep at the Pathoda station, jumped out, and talked hurriedly to two men there. The jeeps and the rest soon caught up, and at once we started off again. After a bit the jungle thinned on the right, and I saw the dim gleam of steel rails. The rails swung away from the road, and almost immediately the jungle in there was aglow with red and yellow light, the trees standing in thick ranks against it, all silhouetted and motionless on a gentle slope.

The convoy halted, and the Gurkhas jumped down. I hurried into the jungle at Savage's heels, thorns plucking at my sari, and twigs whipping across my face.

As we came near to the railway, I saw the long hard line of a carriage standing on one end, the other end high among the branches. The carriage was dark and still, and the trees creaked under its weight, and there was a smell of newly broken wood. I saw other carriages, and men moving about. I had thought the men would be running, with the flames crackling so loudly in front of them, but they were moving slowly, or standing or sitting. The track ran in a shallow cutting there, and some of the grass on the banks had caught fire. British troops in every stage of uniform and undress were moving about like sleepwalkers and padding at the fire with coats and rolled trousers.

An Englishman in blue and white striped pyjamas came to Savage and began to point and explain. I could see seven carriages now—one on the rails, one burning, one up-ended in the jungle, one half into the jungle, and three welded into a single Z-shaped heap across the cutting.

I hadn't seen the engine and began desperately to look for it. An engine and tender couldn't disappear. They weighed 150 tons together, and carried three men. I saw them at last, recognizing the engine's funnel and then the battered curve of its boiler among the three tangled carriages.

Now I was alone with Savage. All the Gurkhas were at work. The breakdown train had arrived without my noticing it, and now its searchlight flashed on so that the dying red flames of the burning carriage flickered and jerked against a background of even white light.

Savage said: "Go and help Chaney in the regimental aid post."

I hadn't then seen any dead or injured men, not close to. The soldiers were pulling lumps out of the wreck, and some of the lumps were strangely shaped. They might have been bedding rolls, or frame members, or men. I didn't want to go to the regimental aid post. There I would have to see those strange shapes close to, and look at them. The men would have raw wounds, and some of them would be bent and blind and dead. In truth, I felt that I had somehow done all this by wearing a sari.

"Go on," Savage said.

I said: "I won't! I'm not a nurse. I *didn't* do this."

Savage put out his arm and caught my shoulder. His fingers tightened into my flesh, and his eyes glittered. He said: "Go and help Chaney to help the poor devils who've been hurt. They didn't do it either."

"I won't. I'll report you. I'll——" I was struggling back as though Savage were pushing me, but he wasn't.

He said, "Go on."

I gasped. "They did do it. It's their fault for——"

Savage stepped away from me and said: "You mustn't let the old school sari down—you little slut."

To get away from him I turned and stumbled along the top of the cutting. After twenty steps I got hold of myself. In trying to hurt me, Savage had only cleared my mind. Everyone must help now. If Mr. Surabhai had been there he would be killing himself trying to help—even if he'd done it. But he couldn't have done it. He

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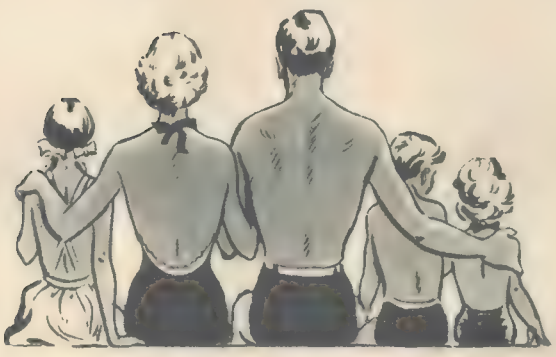

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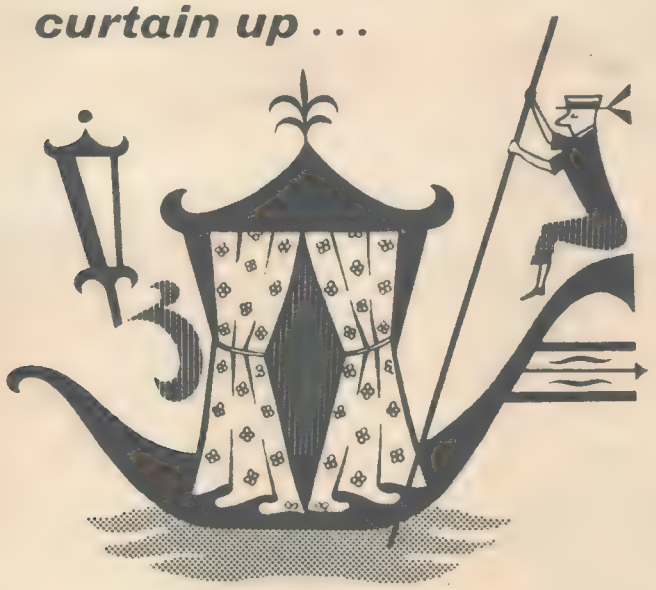

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wouldn't. What he had said was just talk, principle, theory—surely?

I came to the r.a.p., swallowed, and went down to report to Captain Chaney.

I began to bandage and patch, inject and splint and bathe, blindly doing whatever Captain Chaney told me to do. The soldiers were mostly young men, obviously conscripts because they were very polite, especially when they were badly hurt. They lay in a quiet row at the edge of the jungle and called me "miss." Some of the injured were excited, and then often, later, they'd relapse as the shock hit them.

The Gurkhas had brought their degchies, their mess-tins, with them, and lit cooking fires among the trees and made lakes of stewed tea. I walked to the nearest fire and sat down slowly on the dry leaves. A Gurkha came and gave me tea.

I drank thirstily, my head bent over the mess-tin. After a time I saw a pair of shoes in front of me, and above them blue uniform railway trousers. A man's voice said in quick, nervous Hindi: "Oh, daughter, can you tell me if it's lawful for me to drink this tea? My caste is——"

I looked up and saw Bhansi Lal, the stationmaster of Pathoda, whom I knew quite well. He was shaking and stammering, his fat cheeks a-quiver. When my face came up he stopped, began again, and at last got out in English: "Miss Victoria Jones, my word! My sainted aunt! Miss Jones, you were in the train? You have lost all clothing in horrible accident?"

I shook my head and said, wearily, "No. I'm wearing a sari, that's all. I'm sure it's all right for you to drink the tea." Really, I had no patience with the point then.

I beckoned to a Gurkha, and he brought Bhansi Lal a mess-tin of tea. He sipped noisily, staring at me.

He said: "You are wearing sari always now? Very good show. Accident took place outside station limits of Pathoda, Miss Jones. Outside by *miles*—by two miles and three furlongs, approximately. Oh, I would like to catch bloody rapscallions responsible for all this to-do. Twenty-seven officers and soldiers of all ranks killed in Koyli Light Infantry, besides those missing in burned carriage—that is meaning colonel-sahib is not saying whether horrible objects in carriage are one soldier or how many."

"Was the driver killed?" I asked, fearing it might be someone I knew.

Bhansi Lal said: "Driver was killed, both the two firemen were killed. Guard was not killed. My God, Miss Jones, why are every derailment and sabotages performed in vicinity of *my* station? When nothing but calamities are occurring here, who will get the bloody sack but me? It is no dashed tommy-rot!"

SAVAGE cut in. "You look as if you want a drink, Stationmaster!" He was standing over Bhansi Lal. I hadn't seen him come. An uncorked bottle of army-issue rum swung in his right hand. Bhansi-Lal scrambled to his feet, burbling thank-yous, took the bottle, and poured a lot down his throat, holding the bottle high up and away from his mouth.

Savage said: "Now, Mr. Lanson wants you. At the back of the train."

Bhansi Lal tugged at his coat and set his cap straight on his large hairless head, and crashed off through the bushes.

Savage said: "We're going back to Bhowani."

He drove slowly on the way back. I'd forgotten all about the terrible things he'd said to me earlier. When I remembered them, I was almost grateful to him. He had made me do what I ought to do.

His eyes were rimmed with dust and ashes, his uniform was filthy and the black hair on his forearms was matted with perspiration and grey soot. He said: "We've got all the injured away now, to Bhowani and Kishanpur. Chaney told me you'd done a good job of work."

I said: "I didn't do anything."

He said wearily: "Please don't be modest. It doesn't go with that heroic sari. Well, I suppose someone else thinks he's done a good job in killing those fellows and stopping all traffic on the branch line for two or three days."

I said: "Do they know for certain yet that it was sabotage?"

He said: "Yes. The district engineer found two fishplates missing. Later someone picked them up in the jungle the other side of the line. Do you think Surabhai did it?"

I said quickly: "I'm sure he didn't. The police can find out where he was last night. I'm sure he will have been in Bhowani and will be able to prove it. He's always talking to people."

Savage said: "Surabhai doesn't have to unscrew the fishplates himself to be responsible. I asked whether you thought he did it—ordered it done, knew about it."

I answered angrily, being a little frightened: "No, no, I'm sure he didn't."

He said then, "We'll see," and said nothing more until he stopped the jeep in front of our house. There he said: "It's nine fifteen. The Collector wants to see you at five in his bungalow." He engaged gear and drove away. I saluted his back and went inside.

Why did Govindaswami want to see me? Why hadn't Savage told me so earlier? How and when had the appointment been fixed between them? Was it about the train wreck? If so, Savage and Govindaswami must have talked on the radio-telephone during the night. Why were they asking me about poor Mr. Surabhai when it was obvious that K. P. Roy had done it?

I felt suddenly very tired and very dirty and very small. I had a tepid bath and climbed into bed. As I was dropping asleep, I thought Govindaswami might want to see me about Macaulay—but by then I didn't care. Nothing could stop me from trying to find rest and some peace in sleep.

GOVINDASWAMI kept me waiting in his study for ten minutes, and then I heard him talking with another man in the hall and recognized Ranjit's voice. I had had no time to think what this might mean, when Ranjit came in. He looked drawn, tired and handsome. He must have been working all night and all day.

The Collector was wearing a dark red carnation in his buttonhole. He looked as tired as Ranjit, but as soon as he began to speak I knew he was going to come to grips with us.

He began at once: "We are three Indians. We have different backgrounds and we believe in different approaches to the goal. But our goal is the same, as far as patriotism is concerned. I want a free, strong, democratic India, and I want it as soon as possible. Do you, Ranjit?"

Ranjit nodded. Govindaswami glanced at me, raising his eyebrows, and I nodded. It was like a breath of fresh air to have it publicly acknowledged and said aloud that I was trying to be a good Indian.

Govindaswami said: "But this train wreck is the work of men who want violent revolution. Specifically, it is the work of K. P. Roy."

"Roy?" Ranjit said. "You weren't even sure that he was in the province."

Govindaswami said: "Yes, but now we are just about positive that he's actually in Bhowani City. The looting of the ammunition train was certainly his work. We do not know what he intends to do with the explosives that

Consider your verdict

IN the case on page 26, the judge stressed that neither person in a marriage has the absolute right to choose the home: each must be reasonable about it. As in these particular circumstances Irene had unreasonably left Frank, she could not show that he was unreasonable in refusing to join her in a home she had found without consulting him. She lost her case. (*This is the probable verdict, based on actual cases.*)

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he stole, except that he will certainly use them to increase dissension. Who do you think engineered that fiasco when the two processions met the other day? We have got to remove Roy and everyone like him.

"Now, we are working on two lines of approach. One is that someone may know where the stolen explosives are hidden—someone outside Roy's own small circle of faithful Communists, that is.

"The other is that we do have a picture of Roy. Here." He handed it to us where we sat together on the sofa and said: "That's K. P. Roy, in nineteen thirty-seven."

It was an enlargement from a poor negative. A man in European clothes—trousers, shirt, tie, collar, coat—was standing by an ancient taxi, with a big turreted building in the background. The man had short hair and was clean-shaven and smiling. I had seen Ghanshyam "smile," and I was almost sure this man in the picture was Ghanshyam. But I wasn't *quite* sure. Nine years is a long time, and a moustache makes such a difference.

"Have either of you ever seen this man recently, here in Bhowani?"

"No, I've never seen this man," Ranjit said, and handed back the print. He carefully kept his eyes on the Collector, so as not to look at me.

"And you, Miss Jones?" Govindaswami said.

I was ready and did not hesitate, but answered at once. "No, I've never seen him either."

Govindaswami put the print away. He returned with a plain outline map of India, shaded in places in red. He said: "Those are the areas and the cities where revolutionary groups are waiting to see whether what K. P. Roy told them is true or not—whether they can do on a large scale what Roy is doing on a small scale and almost by himself. Whether it is feasible and practicable to disrupt government and communication by terrorism—all government, any government. The R.I.N. mutiny, coinciding with the railway strike, was to be the first big bang, leading to a wider, ever-spreading train of explosions. But the mutiny failed. The derailment of this troop train is, I think, Roy's first effort to show that the rest of the plan need not be abandoned. By this act he is saying: 'Look, it can still be done.'"

RANJIT studied the map carefully for a moment, shook his head and said: "It is very interesting."

Govindaswami said: "Your mother was associated during the 1920s with men and women who we know are now in K. P. Roy's group. That's all I wanted to tell you, Ranjit. Think it over. You, Miss Jones—I wanted you to be here because you have made it clear that you are changing worlds, as I did when I went to Cheltenham. You will be seeing your new world with new eyes. I want you to use those eyes and help me, for India's sake and your own. Try and persuade Mr. Surabhai to help me. I don't want him to stop being a Congress man. I want him and others like him to examine their friends carefully at this time, and sniff the air, and make sure there isn't a rat i' the arras."

He said no more then, but apologized for keeping us so long—it had not been long—and showed us out and stood on his veranda while we bicycled side by side down his long drive.

As soon as a bank of azalea bushes hid him, Ranjit said: "We must talk. Down to the river. This way." He turned to the right off the Pike.

We laid our bicycles on the grass and slowly walked forward to the bank. I sat down on a low boulder, and Ranjit sat at my feet.

I said: "I thought that picture was Ghanshyam."

Ranjit had found a stick and was busy scratching in the earth as he answered: "It was quite like him."

I said, "Ranjit, you know it was Ghanshyam. Why didn't you tell the Collector?"

He muttered: "I don't *know*. It was very like."

I said: "You do know. Why didn't you say so?"

He threw away his stick and looked up into my face. He said: "If they catch him—Ghanshyam—he will tell the truth about Lieutenant Macaulay."

I said: "That will be unpleasant, Ranjit, but it's not serious enough to make us hide K. P. Roy. They won't hang me, you know."

Ranjit said slowly: "They will arrest my mother."

FOR a moment I was silent. I wanted to say something like: "What does that matter?" or, "What does she have to fear if she's innocent?" but obviously Ranjit thought she wasn't innocent. I didn't see how she could be innocent.

Ranjit began to speak in a tense, low voice. He said: "My mother has fought the British for twenty-six years. She's been to jail five times. She's not a revolutionary, she's a patriot, but they'd put her in jail again. I don't agree with everything she says, but I can't blame her. She's seen too much, fought too hard. Besides, she may not know that Ghanshyam is K. P. Roy."

"You can tell her," I said.

Ranjit lifted his shoulders and dropped them in a sudden gesture of hopelessness. He said: "I was trying to deceive myself. If he is K. P. Roy, she knows it very well. But that doesn't mean Mr. Govindaswami is right. *He* says Roy is doing all this, but how do we know he is telling the truth? How do we know that the British are not merely trying to put the blame on Roy so that they can hang him, because they know he is a man who could unify India against them? I'd rather trust my mother."

I opened my bag, got out my cigarette case, and lit a cigarette.

Ranjit suddenly broke into a smile that lit his face, and lay back on his side, propping himself up on one elbow. He said: "I shall never get over seeing you pull out a cigarette and just smoke it, Victoria."

"In a sari, you mean?" I said, smiling at him.

He said: "Yes. All the ordinary Indian ladies will have a fit when they see you. Mrs. Surabhai will give you a severe lecture."

"What about your mother?" I asked.

Ranjit became serious at once and said: "My mother won't mind. She is not ordinary."

I wanted to catch again the butterfly lightness that had linked us just then. I flipped open the case, offered it to him, and said: "Have a coffin nail yourself."

He shook his head and said: "I don't smoke."

I asked him if he didn't like the taste. He said he'd never tried.

I said: "But you're not a Sikh—I

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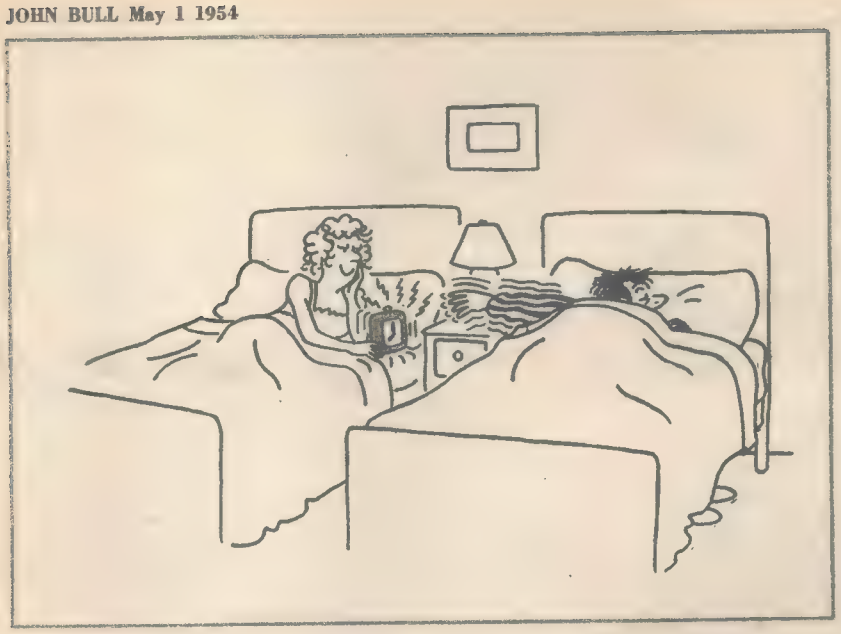

mean by religion. Your mother persuaded you to give it up, didn't she?"

He said: "In 1935. But I've wanted to smoke, and . . ." He stood up quickly, dusting off his clothes. "I think I'm going back. Back to my religion. I tell myself it is ridiculous, but I can't help it. I am feeling more lost every day. I think I will go and see the guru here soon and ask if I can go back. Will you mind?"

I said slowly, thinking as I spoke, "I don't mind, Ranjit. You won't want me to become a Sikh if—if we get married, not at once, will you? Not till I understand more about it?"

There, I'd said right out that I was thinking of marrying him. It was what I'd agreed to do, take the lead, when we talked by the signal that night. But I didn't like it. Why couldn't he take some of the weight of responsibility off me, some of this perpetual having to think and decide?

Ranjit took my hand and brushed his lips across it. "Do you think you will marry me, Victoria?" He was so docile and spoke as though he were asking me whether I meant to have a permanent wave soon.

I held his hand tight and said: "I don't know, Ranjit, I wish it could all be arranged for us. Whenever I think about it I get afraid that I will make you unhappy. I get afraid that I will be unhappy myself, for a time. Then I wonder—for how long a time?"

Ranjit said: "I will wait."

He stood beside me, and our hands were joined, his left with my right. Even holding my hand made him nervous, because Indians don't do it in public.

An engine whistled long and shrill from the city behind us. I knew without looking at my watch that it was 97 Down Express whistling for the Kishanpur Road crossing. A bugle blew a short call, like an order in brass, from the barracks. I knew the call was the "Orderly Havildars" of the 1st 13th Gurkha Rifles. I knew Ghanshyam was K. P. Roy. I knew K. P. Roy was a murderer and a train-wrecker. But he was an Indian. For me there would be no floating in a boat, on the calm tide, to a sheltered shore. . . .

I said: "We'd better get back."

I WORE the sari from then onwards. Pater had seen me in them once or twice, but he had said nothing.

It wasn't many days, though, before he called me to the parlour one evening after supper. Rose Mary was in there, talking sweet to him, obviously intending to join in the attack on me. When Pater asked her to leave the room she grumbled but flounced out and left the house as well.

Pater was sitting in the big armchair on the right of the grate. He was having trouble lighting his pipe, and I sank into the chair opposite, watching him and loving him but prepared to fight him, while he lit a dozen matches and at last got the pipe going. Then he said: "I want to talk with you, Victoria."

I said: "Yes, Pater?"

He said: "You know what it is about. That!" He pointed the stem of his pipe at my sari. "Why are you wearing those clothes now? Aren't the clothes your mother and sister wear good enough for you? What is the matter? Please tell me, girl."

I took a deep, slow breath. I said: "I don't mean to hurt you, Pater. I don't think it's any of your business, actually, but I will tell you. We are half Indian." Pater moved uncomfortably in his chair. I went on, "Well, we are, aren't we? But there's not going to be any place for half-Indians soon. I can't make myself a whole Indian, but I can show that I don't think of myself as whole-English. I can show that I think India is my home."

PATER shook his head obstinately. He said: "Of course I believe there is some Indian blood in our family. Very good blood, too. There is a rumour that my grandmother, Mrs. Duck, was a princess. But even if the rumour is true, and of course it is nothing like as much as *half* Indian that we are, it is stepping down to pretend to be an Indian. Indians are dirty and lazy, Victoria. They will run around like chickens with their heads cut off if the English Government ever leaves them to their own devices. God forbid!"

I said nothing, and after a moment Pater banged his open palm down on the arm of his chair and cried: "What is the matter with you, girl? Do you hate us, all of a sudden? What would *he* think of you? He was a fine man, your great-grandfather." Pater pointed at the Sergeant's empty, silly face.

"You've just said he married an Indian," I answered.

Pater said: "Yes, but he didn't take off his trousers and put on a dhoti, my God! He raised her to *his* level, he did not sink down into all the Indian ways and go crawling on his stomach in front of the idols in the temples, and keep filthy statues in his room and worship them." He ran out of breath, then frowned at me as an idea come to him. He said, much more sharply: "*You* are not thinking of marrying an Indian, are you?"

I said: "I'm twenty-eight, Pater. Surely I can marry whoever I want to. And how does a sergeant *raise* a princess to his level?"

I had got him sidetracked for the moment. He said: "How, you ask me? By being an English gentleman, as a matter of fact, like Colonel Savage. He was only a sergeant, but he was a fine and upright man, and he raised my grandmother to behave decently. Oh, Victoria, for God's sake tell me you are not thinking of marrying Kasel."

I said: "Why shouldn't I, if he asks me and I want to?"

He said: "You are a beautiful girl, Victoria. You can do better for yourself than that. Oh, I know some of our girls have married Indians—just one or two that I have heard of—but it has always been unhappy, a terrible mistake. You are not getting any younger, but you could marry anyone

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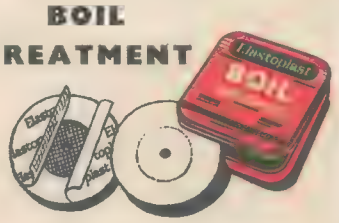

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you liked. If you don't put it off too long you could even marry one of the officers of the Gurkhas."

He shook his head and relit his pipe. When he next looked at me I saw that his eyes were damp, and immediately my own eyes began to water. When he spoke, his voice was low and trembly. He said: "I am not really a fool, Victoria, like you think. I know I am only a cheechee engine driver, and my grandmother was not a princess at all. She was nobody; she may have even been a loose woman. I know as well as you do that a high-caste Indian girl would not marry a sergeant, not in those days. But that is exactly why we have to fight so hard, that is why we must pretend and keep our self-respect, even if we shut our eyes like ostriches to do it. Because that is what we will go back to if we don't."

His voice was quavering terribly now, and there was a lump in my throat. He said: "You don't realize that if the English had not helped us and given us jobs, and if we had not held on to our self-respect, we would have been worse than outcasts. We would be lower than our grandmothers. And now you talk of going back, stepping down. You are throwing away what we have taken a very long time to build. I shall never go Home, but you could. You say there will be changes in India, and I am afraid it is true, but *you* don't have to see them."

He pulled out a big handkerchief and dabbed his eyes. He said: "I think I know how badly you feel sometimes about this. But don't you realize you could set yourself to marry a British officer, and then you could go Home and never see us or think of us again? You could live at Home in a big cantonment all your life and have an English butler. No one will know what you are. You can say you are partly Spanish. That is what Jimmy D'Souza's girl did. She wrote secretly once and said it was fine. In England no one cares, she said; no one even suspects, unless they have been to India. You could have all that instead of this."

He waved his arm round the poky little parlour, at my sari, at Sergeant Duck, at the glaring road and the barren barrack-like little houses.

I muttered: "Perhaps. But how much self-respect could I keep then, Pater? I'd be not much better than a loose woman myself if I did that. It is now, doing what I am doing, that I am beginning to be able to respect myself."

He didn't answer. We sat for a little longer; then I got up and ran over to kiss the top of his head and put my arms round him. He caught my waist and muttered: "Don't think I am against you, Victoria. I am only thinking of your own good, nothing else."

I said: "I know, Pater. I'll always trust you."

I did not sleep well that night.

THE next morning Deputy Superintendent Lanson called me to the Kutcherry. Savage told me that Macaulay's body had been found, and that I could have a legal adviser there with me if I wanted to. But I told him there was no need.

When Lanson began to speak, his tone was noticeably harder than at our last interview. "Macaulay's body was found this morning in a dung heap in the city. It had a notice hung round the neck, 'Quit India,' which is the current Congress slogan. His head had been battered in, and other mutilations carried out."

I kept my mouth tight closed. Too tight, for he was watching me sharply.

"You're surprised? Why?"

I shook my head. I said: "I was thinking, how horrible. A dung heap, and—all those horrible things."

Lanson looked at me for a minute, the pipe rattling as he sucked on it. "I have to find out, Miss Jones, what you were doing during all those hours in which Macaulay might have been killed. I have to have proof of everything you say."

"When was he killed?" I asked automatically. About eight o'clock, it had been, but I would be supposed to ask.

"We know when he was killed, Miss

"Nice hooter, isn't it, Mr. Jessup?"

Jones," Lanson said shortly. "To the hour, and nearly to the minute."

I didn't know what to do with my eyes. If I looked out of the window at the pleaders and their clients in front of the court opposite, I'd be avoiding Lanson's eyes. If I stared at him, I'd be over-anxious.

Lanson said: "Well? Can you give me these proofs?"

"I can't prove I was in bed, Mr. Lanson."

"No, but tell me all you can."

"You've got it all already. I've told you."

"I want to check it again."

I TOLD my story again. If they did know the exact time of Macaulay's death it would sound thin. Why had Ghanshyam put the "Quit India" sign on his body? That threw suspicion on Congress.

I interrupted myself to say: "But why do you think I did it, Mr. Lanson? It must have been some Congress extremist, or someone who wanted to put the blame on Congress."

He said: "Perhaps, Miss Jones. You know the Congress crowd pretty well by now, though, don't you? And I haven't said you did it. But I have my duty, you know, just as much as Colonel Savage has his. Now, tell me. . . ."

The interrogation went on.

At the end Lanson relaxed a little. He said: "Thank you, Miss Jones. Have you ever heard anyone threaten—or promise, or talk—about derailing a troop train?"

I held my hands close in my lap and shook my head. I answered: "No," but my voice was very small.

"Are you sure?" he said.

"Yes," I said.

He said: "I asked because about twenty people *have* heard such talk. From Mr. Surabhai. He's made no secret of his belief that an Indian patriot would be justified in derailing a troop train, regardless of the fact that the R.I.N. mutiny is over. It's funny you haven't heard him, because nearly everybody else who knows him has."

"Well, I haven't," I snapped, getting angry.

He said: "Very good. Have you seen this man recently?" He pushed the photograph of K. P. Roy into my hands.

I gave it back at once and flared up because anger and fear were pressing together in me. I said: "No, I haven't, and the Collector's asked me all this already, and you know he has. Why do you keep on at me? Just because I wear a sari now, I haven't become a murderess, a train-wrecker!"

Lanson said calmly: "I'm asking you because we think this man"—he tapped the photograph—"has been seen in the district around the Sirdarni-sahiba's house. You've been there quite a lot, naturally, since you are engaged to Ranjit Singh."

"I'm not engaged to him," I gasped. "Who told you that?"

He said: "No one told me directly. But the Sirdarni is telling other people. About this man, though—I hear that someone rather like him was seen talking to you in the tunnel where Station Road crosses under the railway lines, on the day that the two processions clashed. . . ." He gave details.

I thought of two things at once. How dare the Sirdarni announce my engagement before I had consented, before Ranjit had even asked me properly? Someone must have passed by while Ghanshyam was putting my bicycle chain back on. Or someone might just have been able to see into the tunnel from the lower windows of one of the houses beyond.

I said: "I remember that a man helped me to put my bicycle chain on when it fell off. I don't remember him at all. I gave him a few annas."

Lanson stood up, his chair squeaking back on the stone floor. "Then that will be all for now, Miss Jones."

I had been thinking. I said: "If this man hangs about near the Sirdarni-sahiba's house, why don't you search it, or surround it or something?"

The telephone rang. Lanson spoke into it stolidly and slowly in Hindustani. When he put it down he said: "That was a message from Pathoda. A fire started in the jungle just west of a little village called Maslan at about six o'clock this morning. There was a strong west wind up there then, and the fire has completely destroyed Maslan. There were only about twelve houses, but they've all gone."

I said: "Oh," wondering what was coming next.

Lanson nodded, and said: "It's interesting, and I'll tell you why. We've been able to get a little information bearing, perhaps, on the accident to the troop train. Nothing much—only that, the evening before, a villager crossing the line on his way back from an errand in Pathoda saw three men moving through the jungle near the place where the train was later derailed. When we began our inquiries up there, this villager came forward and told us what he had seen—told us publicly."

"Oh," I said again.

LANSON went on: "He was from Maslan. He gave us help. Now his home is burned and his cattle dead. He's penniless. So is everybody else in Maslan. It is very unlikely that the fire was accidental. You were asking why we don't search or watch the Kasel house for K. P. Roy. The answer, Miss Jones, is that we have, several times, and we are. But I think the bird has flown. Not far, but he's not in the house, if he ever was—unless he can turn himself into a rat and hide under the floor. That's what he is, Miss Jones, as a matter of fact—a murdering rat."

Hearing this was far more terrible than killing Macaulay. Ranjit and his mother were sheltering K. P. Roy, and I was helping them. But for the moment I'd have to control my doubt and fear.

Lanson walked round the table and held out his hand. He said: "Goodbye for the moment. I think I can tell you that we have a pretty good idea about Macaulay's murder. We won't be able to clear it up—dispose of it tidily, you know—until we find this fellow K. P. Roy and stop the derailments and everything else that has been going on in the district, such as this fire at Maslan."

He walked beside me to the door. Then he said, and looked straight at me: "The murder's bad, of course, if it was a real murder and not, say, self-defence—but it's not important compared with Roy. If the murderer would get all the people who know something about Roy and the stolen explosives and the derailments to talk—we'd be very pleased with him. My driver will take you back, and I think you'd better not leave Bhowani without my permission until all this has been cleared up."

To be continued next week

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RAFFLES AND THE PRINCESS AMEN

Continued from page 10

must get back into the mummy-case, that on Monday I would come and withdraw Princess Amen. I groped desperately for words to convey all this.

"A most inconvenient thing to have happened," I said loudly, then dropped my voice to add, "my having to bother you like this, Mr. Purkiss."

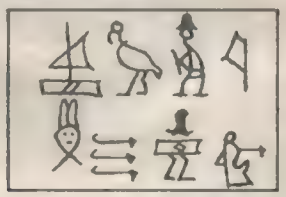
I knelt down by the Egyptian box and fumbled in my pocket for the key.

"Hurry, please, Mr. Lesage," Purkiss said impatiently.

I found the key and put it in the lock of the Egyptian box. And suddenly, belatedly, with a sense of utter despair, I realized that I dared not open it. Raffles probably had stuffed into it, *on top of the mummy-case*, the tarnished electro-plate and threadbare carpets from Mrs. Randolph's packing-case. And Purkiss would see them.

There was a surging like surf in my ears. I was cornered, trapped. I knelt there, staring down at the box, not daring to turn the key; and dimly I became aware of something on the box which certainly had not been there before—new yellow paint on the faded yellow of the hieroglyphs. *Additions had been made to the hieroglyphs!*

I bent lower, pretending to have difficulty in turning the key in the lock, and slid a glance round the vault. On one of the racks was a tin of paint with a yellow-dabbed brush in it—the paint used for outlining on the floor the storage space taken up by the articles on deposit. I looked again at the additions to the hieroglyphs: a pair of sails, a policeman's helmet, a pair of long ears (rabbit's ears—Bunny!), three arrow-points, an opera hat and a diamond shape and a pair of legs, a pointing arm. Thus:



I knelt there, rigid. It seemed utterly impossible that Raffles, locked all night in this vault, could have

learned of Birdie Minton's flight. Yet there, clearly, was Birdie, pursued by a policeman, boarding a ship. Equally clear were the instructions to me, Bunny; namely, that Raffles was in the Egyptian box, the box with a diamond shape painted on its side, and that I was to carry it away.

I was so stunned that I had forgotten to keep up my pretence of difficulty with the key. "Mr. Lesage!" Purkiss said sharply, "Hurry, please!"

I looked up at him. He had his watch in his hand. I rose.

"I'm so sorry," I said. "I was thinking. You know, Mr. Purkiss, I really fear I shall have no peace until this mummy is in the care of experts. I shall worry all the time. I've come to the conclusion I'd rather eat humble pie and let the museum authorities have the mummy on their own terms. I'll take it to them right away, I think. I've a four-wheeler outside."

"Well, really, Mr. Lesage!" he said testily.

But he called for the porter and Mr. Andrews, and, leaving them to deal with the box, escorted me back up the steps to his office. I surrendered the bank's receipt, and, with a very cursory handshake, he closed—almost slammed—his door on me.

There were a good many people at the cash counter. As I walked past them towards the outer door, I heard a voice I knew speak to one of the cashiers. "Might as well have a look at my mortgage agreement while I'm here," the voice said. "I'll trouble you to have up my deposit-box."

I stole a glance at the speaker, and saw the back of a purplish neck topped by a rakish topper. Ferdy Farr!

I fairly shot out of the bank, told Ivor Kern's driver to drive like the devil to his boss's place, then squeezed into the brougham, along with the great box, as the driver cracked his whip. I tapped hard on the box.

"Raffles?"

The weight of the world seemed to lift from me as I heard his voice: "Good work, Bunny!"

The clopping of the horse's hoofs broke from a fast trot into a canter. I looked back anxiously through the oval window, watching for any sign of pursuit. I still had seen none when I felt his hand on my shoulder. He was out of the box. He dropped on to the seat beside me, massaging his thighs, smiling.

"I never doubted you'd come," he said, "as soon as you heard about Birdie's flitting. My only fear was that you wouldn't spot my little hieroglyphic code." He took out his cigarette-case. "You know, I quite enjoyed myself in that vault—up till the moment when, as I was going through the deed-boxes, I came across that very afternoon's paper in one of them. I wondered what the devil it was doing there, took a look at it—and by heaven, I saw that story about Birdie Minton! Bunny, from then on, my night in that vault was an interminable nightmare. Would you see the story? If so, what would you do? Would you come to try to get word to me? If so, how would you probably do it? And could I contrive a message for *you*?"

He shook his head. "That newspaper saved my skin, Bunny. But how the devil did it get into a deed-box in the vault?"

I snapped my fingers.

"Dacres!" I said. "When I arrived at the bank with Princess Amen yesterday afternoon, the newsboys were shouting the latest race results. This Dacres, a dandified young chap, was down in the vault when Purkiss and I entered it. Dacres shuffled some documents hastily into a deed-box he had open. Of course! Purkiss said something about young clerks reading the racing results! Dacres didn't want his manager to see him with a newspaper in his hand, so he just shoved it into the deed-box along with the documents, and didn't get a chance to retrieve it."

I drew in my breath, marvelling. "And Ivor Kern imagined your luck had run out!"

Raffles laughed aloud. "Not yet! And it's well in for Miss Josephine and Dick and Frank, too—because old Ferdy's due to have a good, ripe insurance indemnity fall into his lap!" He lighted a Sullivan. "Now, let's open Princess Amen's box and have a look at the rest of the swag—if it's all right behind, Bunny?"

I glanced back again through the oval window. The horse's hoofs were clopping rhythmically again in a brisk trot. There was no sign of pursuit. In the grey morning light, the good old London drizzle was falling. Never had it looked so beautiful to me.

"All right behind," I said. THE END

REACH FOR THE SKY

Continued from page 13

already arrived, their pilots sipping mugs of tea in a group nearby.

Mermagen bustled over. "Patrol Dunkirk, chaps, 12,000 feet. Take-off as soon as we're refuelled."

"What the hell!" Bader said. "What's happening over there?"

Mermagen shrugged. "Haven't the slightest idea. Something about evacuating, I think."

It seems odd now that the word Dunkirk did not mean a thing then. The army had laid a screen of secrecy over the plans for the evacuation and people did not realize that the beaches were filling with exhausted men—certainly not the fighter pilots from the north who had not seen the war yet. The transition from peace to war is often cushioned and unreal. They did not quite grasp the idea that they might run into German planes over Dunkirk: and, in fact, that day they didn't.

Mermagen led them off in four neat vics of three; they climbed steadily and at nine thousand feet vanished into a layer of fluffy white cloud. At ten thousand feet they popped like porpoises out of the cloud and levelled off at 12,000, still in tidy formation . . . unblooded. A Messerschmitt coming up behind could have shot the whole lot down.

Far ahead Bader saw a strange black plume floating hugely through the limitless froth they were riding over. Mermagen's voice crackled over the radio: "That looks like it. That smoke. Must be burning oil tanks."

For a long time they circled the smoke and ranged over the cloud. Mermagen wanted to dive below the cloud but the controller had said 12,000 feet and such orders (in their inexperience) were orders. They saw nothing else in the sky, and after an hour and a half Mermagen led them away. . . . Under the cloud, blood was staining the sand as the Stukas dive-bombed and the Messerschmitt 109s and 110s strafed.

On the way back 222 Squadron was told by radio to land at Manston, and after that were told to fly to Duxford, and at Duxford were ordered off again for Hornchurch. "Typical shambles," they grumbled, blasé about the war.

Pistols In Their Boots

At Hornchurch they gazed, startled, and then with mild derision at pilots of other squadrons walking around with pistols tucked in their flying-boots and as often as not with beard stubble. The others had been flying over France for several days and were quiet and preoccupied. Still the impact did not strike the 222 pilots, who considered the pistols and beard stubble as "line-shooting."

At 3.30 a.m. Bader was shaken awake again. "Take-off at four thirty, sir," said the batman. It was getting beyond a joke.

Unbroken cloud lay over the land at about four thousand feet, but this day they flew at three thousand. Skirting the North Foreland to pass Dover on the right, he looked down on the grey sea with amazement. Out from the Thames Estuary, from Dover and the bays, little boats were swarming, slowly converging, heading south-east till they stretched across the sea in a straggling line, trailing feathers of foam. There were yachts and tugs, launches, ferries, coasters, lifeboats, paddle steamers, here and there a destroyer or a cruiser. It was unbelievable. God, he thought, it's like the Great West Road on a Bank Holiday.

Mermagen led them across the dirty sand by Gravelines and swung along the beaches towards Dunkirk. At first, the men in the distance looked like a wide stain of ants teeming over a flat nest and then, as the planes swept nearer, like flies, thousands and thousands stuck together, packing the sand. In the green shallows crawled the vanguard of the little boats, and black lines that were the heads of men threaded the water towards them.

A voice on the radio said, "Aircraft ahead." Bader saw them in the same moment, about twelve of them, about three miles ahead and a little to the right. He wondered who they were . . . not Spitfires or Hurricanes, and a surprised voice said in his earphones, "Hell, they're 110s!"

A shock sparked through him. They were coming head-on and in seconds he could see the twin-engines and twin fins. The Messerschmitts veered left, climbing for the cloud . . . must be carrying bombs, avoiding a fight.

Mermagen, in front, pulled up the nose of his Spitfire and cartridge cases streamed out of the wings as he fired. But he was a long way out of normal range. Then one of the 110s suddenly streamed black smoke, dipped out of the formation and went straight down, flaming. The other Germans had vanished into the cloud and the sky was clear again.

When they landed at Hornchurch everyone clustered round Mermagen excitedly. "Well, I must say," Mermagen said, "I was *most* surprised when that thing fell down."

"I must say," said Bader, "so were the rest of us."

But it had been the real thing—if only a taste.

Next morning out of bed at 3.30 again for Dunkirk, and this time not a sign of enemy aircraft, only the ants on the beach and the little boats nosing bravely into the shore. So it was the next day, and the next. Other squadrons excitedly reported running into packs of Messerschmitts and Stukas, and the bloody fights they had with them. Bader listened intently and with impatience.

In the morning he felt dog-tired when the batmen woke him at the same time. Same routine. An odd haze stretched like a ribbon towards London from Dunkirk, and even in the cockpit at three thousand feet he smelt burning oil and knew what the haze was. Down below the same brave little boats streamed over the water. Dunkirk ahead . . . and over Dunkirk a gaggle of swift-growing dots.

Spitfires Give Chase

He knew what they were instantly. The 110s wheeled inland without dropping their bombs, and the Spitfires leaped after them, blaring on full throttle. No time for thinking, but as he turned his reflector sight on and the gun button to "fire," he knew he was going to shoot.

A glance back through the Perspex; the straining Spitfires were stringing out in a ragged line and up to the left four grey shapes were diving at them —Messerschmitt 109s, the first he had

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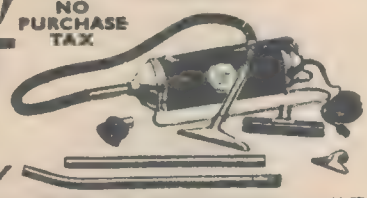

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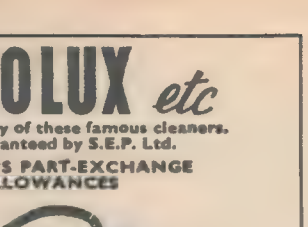

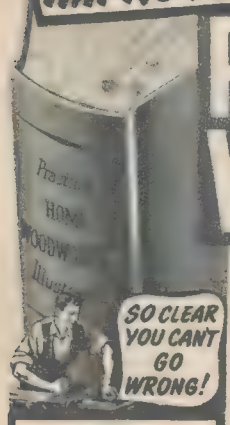

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seen. From the beam they flicked across in front like darting sharks, winking orange flashes in the noses as they fired.

He rammed stick and rudder over and the Spitfire wheeled after them. A 109 shot up in front; his thumb jabbed the firing button and the guns in the wings squirted with a shocking noise. The 109 seemed to be filling his windscreen. A puff of white spurted behind its cockpit as though someone had used a giant flint-gun. The puff was chopped off . . . for a moment nothing . . . then a spurt of orange flame mushroomed round the cockpit and flared back like a blow-torch.

The 109 rolled drunkenly, showing her belly, and in the same moment he saw the black cross on its side. It was true. They did have black crosses. Suddenly it was real and the 109 was falling away and behind, flaming. Exultation welled sharply up, a fiery thrill running through him as he swung back towards the squadron. But the squadron had gone; not a plane in sight except the plunging torch on the end of the ribbon of black smoke running down the sky behind.

Two Were Missing

The heady joy of the kill flooded back as he slid out over the water towards England. A glow of fulfilment. Blood runs hotly at the kill when a pilot wins back his life in primitive combat. He had fought a plane and shot at it, impersonally, not seeing the man, and longed to get back and tell everyone. But when he taxied in, the joy died. Two of the others were missing.

That afternoon, thirsting for more, he flew back to Dunkirk with the squadron, and on the fringe of the little boats off the breakwater saw a shadow diving on a destroyer. Another shock—black crosses on the wings as a Heinkel 111 swept over the funnels. A white core of water erupted just behind the destroyer and her stern kicked up, the screws foaming out of the water.

Bader peeled off after the Heinkel. Little flashes came from the bomber's glasshouse, and Bader pressed his own gun button and the flashes stopped. Good! Killed the gunner! The Heinkel steep-turned sharply inside him. As he pulled up to swing in again two more Spitfires were closing on the bomber, already a mile away. Amazing how fast everything went. No chance of catching them in time. He looked for the rest of the squadron, but they, too, had vanished.

The squadron stayed at Hornchurch. Morning after morning up at 3.15 for the dawn patrol, and other patrols, but always it was the other squadrons that found the enemy, which was infuriating. A report came through that Geoffrey Stephenson was missing.

On June 4, the Prime Minister ordered a last patrol and Bader flew on it. The beach by Dunkirk was empty and the crumbling town lay inert under the smoke. Out of the harbour tacked a single yacht with a little white sail; it must have been the last boat out of Dunkirk and they circled it protectively till low petrol forced them home.

Told Thelma Sad News

Dunkirk was over and Bader, suddenly exhausted, slept nearly twenty-four hours, waking to find a grim new mood lying over Britain. You could see what the pilots were thinking by their faces—if it was fighting they wanted they were going to get it.

On a weekend pass he drove down to Thelma, who had gone back to Bagshot. He had to tell her Geoffrey Stephenson was missing, and after that they did not talk about the war.

The fight seemed a long time coming and the days were unexciting with training—formation flying, dummy attacks, night flying. The squadron moved back to Kirton-in-Lindsey.

Towards midnight on June 13 Bader was 12,000 feet over the Humber, looking for an unidentified aircraft that had been tracked in from Germany. Peering out of the little cockpit he could see nothing but a few pale stars and knew there was little chance of seeing anything else. The Spitfire, with its tiny Perspex hood and long nose, was not good for night flying, and seeking a raider in the dark was like being blindfolded and chasing a rabbit in the woods. But then there were no other defences.

"Red One, Red One," the controller's voice said. "Weather closing in. Return to base immediately."

He swung steeply down towards the blacked-out land, but the rain cloud moved in faster. On a homing course he was only a few hundred feet up, and right over the airfield, before, dimly, he picked up the flarepath suffused through a veil of rain.

Overshot Flarepath

He floated past the first flare . . . too high. The second flashed behind . . . and then the third before he touched on the downhill runway. The tail was not down and he knew he had misjudged. Stick hard back in his stomach, but still the tail stayed up and the flares flashed by. In the same moment he knew he was going to overshoot and that it was too late to open up and take off again; then the tail was down and the brakes were on as hard as he dared.

In front there were no more flares . . . only blackness. An agony of waiting, and then a tearing crash as the plane jolted, slid her belly over the low wall of an aircraft pen, sheering the undercart off, and jarred to a stop. Bricks were suddenly raining down on the metal, and the mind for a moment was a blank. Then he said one short, unprintable word.

A car screeched along the perimeter grass. Tubby Mermagen loomed out of the darkness. "Douglas," he called anxiously, "are you all right?"

"No," Bader growled. "I'm just furious."

"Serves you right," Mermagen said. "That was a ruddy awful approach."

Off To Headquarters

In the morning Mermagen greeted him with a sly grin: "Well, Douglas, we're losing you."

Bader stared, remembering last night's accident, and thought with a chill of being grounded.

"It's all right," Mermagen said soothingly. "You're getting a squadron."

Bader stared again.

"It's not a joke," Mermagen grinned. "L.M. wants to see you."

He drove to 12 Group headquarters at Hucknall and stood once more before the A.O.C. Without preamble Leigh-Mallory said: "I've been hearing of your work as a flight commander. I'm giving you a squadron, Number 242."

(Better get it over!)

Bader said: "Yes, sir. . . . Sir, there's one thing I should tell you. . . . I broke a Spitfire last night. Overshot landing."

Leigh-Mallory said mildly: "Well, that happens sometimes, you know."

Wearing his hair shirt to the last, Bader went on: "Sir, the point is that last time you promoted me, I'd just broken one."

Leigh-Mallory looked grave, then grinned. "Don't worry," he said. "Your new squadron has Hurricanes."

Brisk again, Leigh-Mallory went on: "Two-four-two are a Canadian squadron, the only one in the R.A.F. Nearly all the pilots are Canadians and they're a tough bunch. They're just back from France, where they got pretty badly mauled and lost quite a few aircraft. They were messed around quite a bit; it wasn't their fault and now they're fed up. Frankly, morale is low. They need a bit of decent organization and some firm handling; someone who can talk tough, and I think you're the chap to do it. We may need every fighter squadron we've got on the top line soon. The Luftwaffe seems to be gathering across the Channel."

The squadron was at Coltishall, near Norwich, Leigh-Mallory said, and Squadron Leader Bader was to take over as from that moment. He stood, up, shook Bader's hand, and said: "Good luck in your first command."

Squadron Leader Bader! How unemotional the interview had been and

"He must like you, Mr. White. Usually he goes to bed without a murmur"

how deep the content it stirred! Eight weeks ago he had been a flying officer. It hardly even occurred to him that he had caught up with his contemporaries; he was longing to flex his muscles in his first command. By evening he had driven a hundred miles back to Kirton, packed his kit, telephoned Thelma and was steering the M.G. towards Coltishall.

After breakfast next morning, the "station master" at Coltishall, the pipe-smoking, phlegmatic Wing Commander Beisiegel, told Bader about his new squadron, and was not comforting. About a half of the ground crews were English, three or four of the pilots were English and the rest were Canadians. Wild Canadians—and most allergic to commanding officers.

The news of Bader's arrival reached the squadron. One of the pilots encountered Bernard West, the squadron engineer officer, and said: "Have you seen the new C.O.?"

"No, I haven't." West was greatly interested and a little wary. "What's this one like?"

"Bit unusual," the pilot said cryptically. "I don't suppose we'll be seeing much of him. He's got no legs." West, a warrant officer of twenty years' service who had seen most things in the air force, gaped and groaned.

Before meeting the pilots, who were all down at the dispersals, on readiness, Bader had a long talk about them with his new adjutant, Flight Lieutenant Peter Macdonald. At last Bader said: "Well, let's go down and meet these chaps."

A Cool Reception

"A" Flight dispersal was a wooden hut on the edge of the airfield, and he pushed the door open and stumped in unheralded, followed by Macdonald. From his lurching walk they knew who he was. A dozen pairs of eyes surveyed him coolly from chairs and the iron beds where pilots slept at night for dawn readiness. He had had a vague idea that they would all stand up respectfully; that was the usual thing. But no one got up; no one even seemed to move except that a couple rolled over on the cots to see him more clearly. Even the hands stayed in the pockets and the room was silent. Watchful. The duel seemed to last a long time.

At last he said, not aggressively but firmly: "Who is in charge here?"

No one answered.

"Well, who's the senior?"

Again no one answered, though the men looked at each other inquiringly.

"Isn't anyone in charge?"

A large dark young man said: "I guess not."

Bader eyed them a little longer, anger flaring under his collar. But it was not the moment to get tough. He turned abruptly and went out.

In "B" Flight dispersal the unresponsive eyes again stared silently.

"Who is in charge here?" he asked. After a while a thickset young man with wiry hair and a face that looked as though it had been roughly chipped out of granite, rose slowly out of a chair and said in a strong Canadian accent: "I guess I am." He wore only the single ring of a flying officer.

"Isn't there a flight commander?"

"There's one somewhere but he isn't here," said the young man.

"What's your name?"

"Turner." And then, after a distinct pause, "sir."

He'd Show Them

Bader surveyed again the watchful eyes and again turned and walked out. A dozen yards from the door was a Hurricane. He headed for it and pulled himself up on the wing. A parachute, helmet and goggles already lay in the cockpit and he lifted his leg over the side, hauled himself in and pulled on the helmet. If they thought the new C.O. was a cripple there was one damn good way to make them think again. He started up, pointed the Hurricane's snout across the field and opened up.

Right over the airfield for half an hour non-stop he tumbled the Hurricane round the sky, doing the old fluent routines of Hendon, one aerobatic merging into another: two or three loops in a row, rolls off the top, rolls, stall turns, finishing up with a Gamecock speciality in which he pulled up in a loop, flick-rolled into a spin at the top, pulled out of the spin and completed the loop. When he dropped her on to the grass and taxied in, all the pilots were standing outside the hut watching, but he climbed out unaided, did not even look at them, got into his car, drove off to his office in a hangar and sent for Bernard West.

He liked the solid, north-country look of West as soon as the veteran warrant officer walked in and saluted.

"What's our equipment state?" he asked.

"Eighteen Hurricanes, sir," West said. "They're all new."

"Good. I want good serviceability on them."

"I'll keep them flying as long as I can, sir," West said, "but that won't be for long. We have no spares and no tools. I'm scrounging what I can, but if you do any operations they'll all be grounded in no time."

"What d'you mean, no spares or tools?" Bader demanded.

West explained that they had all been lost in France. Only one of the fitters had brought his own personal tools back in his kitbag. The rest

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seemed to have brought back only cigarettes. He sounded angry.

Bader, looking grim, asked: "Have you requisitioned for a new issue?"

West said yes, he had. The indent forms and vouchers and all the duplicates made a pile six inches high, but the station stores officer said they had to go through the normal channels in their turn. West considered that the channels were well clogged.

"Well," Bader said grimly, "we'll ruddy well unclog them."

In the morning he called all the pilots to his office and eyed them coolly and silently, noting the rumpled uniforms, the preference for roll-neck sweaters instead of shirts and ties, the long hair and general untidy air. At last he spoke: "Look here . . . it is *not* smart to walk about looking like mechanics who haven't washed the grease off their hands. I want this to be a good squadron and you're a scruffy-looking lot. A good squadron *looks* smart. Just for a start I don't want to see any more flying-boots or roll-neck sweaters in the mess. You will wear shoes, and shirts and ties. Is that perfectly clear?"

Every Man For Himself

It was a mistake.

Turner said unemotionally in a deep, slow Canadian voice: "Most of us don't have any shoes or shirts or ties except what we're wearing."

"What d'you mean?"—aggressively.

"We lost everything we had in France." Evenly, with just trace of cynicism, Turner went on to explain the chaos of the running fight, how they had apparently been deserted by authority, separated from their ground staff, shunted from one place to another, welcome nowhere, till it had been every man for himself, each pilot servicing his own aircraft, scrounging his own food, and sleeping under his own wing; then searching for enough petrol to take off and fight as they were forced back from one landing ground to another.

Seven had been killed, two wounded and one had had a nervous breakdown—nearly fifty per cent pilot casualties. When the end had come the rest had flown themselves back across the Channel and been sent to Coltishall. Since then things had not greatly improved and they were drifting, without steerage way.

When he had finished Bader said: "I'm sorry. I apologize for my remarks." A brief silence. "Have you claimed for loss of kit?"

Apparently they had, and it was assumed, with another tinge of cynicism, that the claim was drifting quietly along the proper channels.

"Right," Douglas said. "Tomorrow the whole lot of you go into Norwich, to the tailors. Order what you want. I'll guarantee that it's paid. O.K.?"

A shuffle of assent.

"Meantime, for tonight, beg or borrow shoes and shirts from someone. I've got some shirts and you can borrow all I've got. O.K.?"

"That's fine, sir," said Turner, who seemed to be their spokesman.

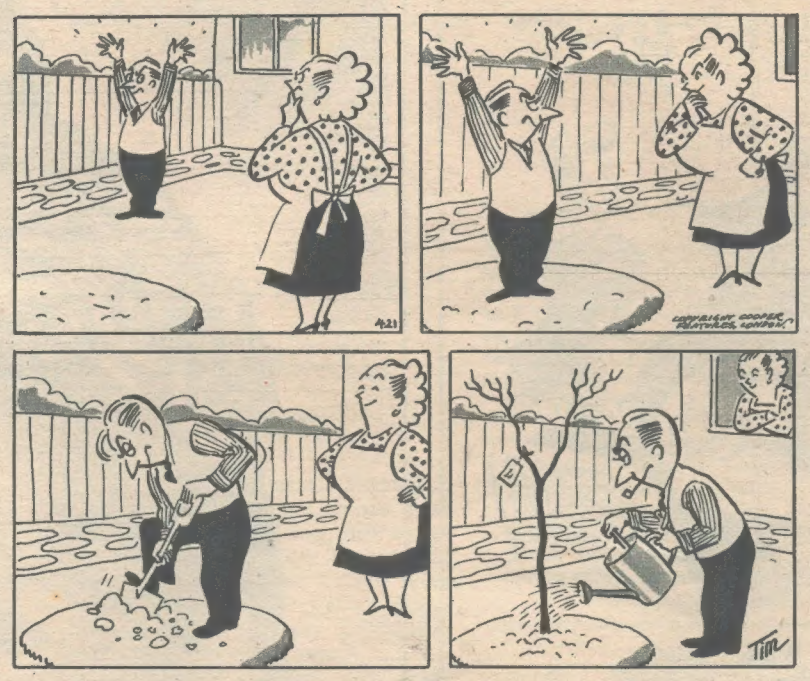
"Right! Now . . ." (briskly) "relax and take it easy. What fighting have you had and how did you get on?"

Found Pilots Were Keen

The next half-hour was a lively discussion on various aspects of the trade, and afterwards Bader interviewed each pilot in turn, finding, with one or two exceptions, that he liked them very much. Suddenly, they were keen and co-operative, though one pilot, an Englishman, seemed unhappy and thought he would be more suited to Training Command. After talking to him for a while Bader burst out angrily: "The trouble about you is you don't want to fight. I'll have you posted off this squadron in twenty-four hours."

The remaining flight commander he also summed up swiftly as unsuitable, and as soon as he was alone telephoned Group and asked them to send him the best two flight commanders they could find. For one of them he suggested Eric Ball, of 19 Squadron. Group said that would be fine, and for the second

OH, JOHNNY! *by TIM*



chap they recommended a young man called Powell-Sheddon.

"What's he like?" asked Bader.

"Stutters a bit," said Group, "but he's a very good type."

"Stutters! Stutters!" the phone vibrated in Group's ear. "That's no damn good to me. What's going to happen over the radio in a fight?"

"I should have thought he'd be just the chap for you." Group sounded slightly injured. "It's not a bad stutter and he's good leader material . . . ex-Cranwell."

"Cranwell," boomed Bader. "Just the chap. Send him along."

Pair Of Glowing Eyes

When he put the phone down he sent for West. "Any more word about your spares and tools?" Bader asked.

West said no, there wasn't. Three minutes later the stores officer, working serenely on vouchers in his kingdom of shelves, saw two square hands descend palm down on his desk. He looked up into a pair of glowing eyes.

Politely enough, Acting Squadron Leader Bader asked about the tools for his squadron, and the stores officer, shrugging at the masses of paper work, explained that he was nearly snowed under. Coltishall was a new station and there were masses of things to be acquired . . . blankets, soap, boots. . . . The depots only supplied them in their own good time and only if they got all the correct forms.

"To hell with your forms and your blankets and your blasted toilet paper," Bader said wrathfully, "I want my spares and tools and I want 'em damn soon."

After lunch he began leading the pilots up in twos for formation, and was pleased to see that they knew how to handle their Hurricanes, though their formation (by his standards) was ragged. Though they had done more fighting than he had, he had already decided to train them for future fighting according to his own idea.

That night in the mess all of them were reasonably neat in shoes and shirts and ties, and he turned his sparkling charm on them. Soon the ice was broken and his pilots clustered round, laughing and talking, taking swigs at their beer and getting to know him while he, orange squash in hand, was further summing them up. His breeziness was like a shot in the arm to them, and towards the end of the evening one of the pilots put down his empty pint-pot and said: "Hell, sir, we were really scared you were going to be a passenger or another goddam figurehead."

By the second morning there was already a feeling of direction about the squadron. People were neater and earlier and everyone seemed to be busy. For the first hour or two the new C.O. was appearing everywhere, at dispersals, in the maintenance hangar, the radio hut, instrument section and the armoury.

By ten o'clock he was leading sections of Hurricanes into the air again, and this time his voice came snapping crisply over the radio when any aircraft lagged or waffled a few feet out of position. Later in the dispersals hut he parked his rump on the end of a bed, lit his pipe and gave his pilots his first talk on his ideas of fighter tactics, finding an intelligent audience.

After lunch Eric Ball and George Powell-Sheddon arrived. That afternoon both were leading their pilots in formation. Within a couple of days there was a perceptible impression of the whole squadron clicking into position as a team.

Bader kept trying to get the tools and spares, bickering daily with the stores officer. Many words were spoken but no equipment materialized. About the seventh day, he stamped across to the station commander and said: "Look, sir, the boys are fit for anything now, but we still haven't got our tools and spares. As the equipment chaps don't seem inclined to do anything about it I've sent this signal to Group." He handed it across.

"An Awful Shindig"

Beisiegel read the curt message with mounting distress: 242 SQUADRON NOW OPERATIONAL AS REGARDS PILOTS BUT NON-OPERATIONAL REPEAT NON-OPERATIONAL AS REGARDS EQUIPMENT.

"Good God," the wing commander was appalled. "Why the devil didn't you show it to me first?"

After a heated scene there, Bader went back to his office and showed it to West, whose eyes widened as he read. With masterly understatement, West observed: "It's . . . a bit unusual, sir. There'll be an awful shindig at Group."

"There'll be an awful shindig from Fighter Command, too," said Bader. "I've sent a copy there as well."

West broke a few moments of pregnant silence: "Well, sir, we'll either be getting our tools or a new C.O."

The upheaval was immediate. Bader was playing snooker in the mess with his pilots that night when an orderly announced he was wanted on the phone. He picked it up and the voice of a squadron leader (equipment) at Fighter Command Headquarters said coldly: "Squadron Leader Bader, what is the meaning of this extraordinary signal you sent today?"

"It means exactly what it says," Bader replied bluntly. "We haven't got any tools or spares and I'm going to keep this squadron non-operational till I get them."

The voice observed with severity that these were difficult times and tools and spares were short. Moreover, there was a proper procedure for obtaining new equipment and if everyone ignored such procedure and did what Squadron Leader Bader had done there would be frightful chaos.

"I've carried out the correct procedure and nothing has happened," Bader snapped.

"I'm quite sure you can operate with what you've got."

"Look, don't you tell *me* what I can do. I'll tell *you* what I want and until I get it this squadron stays non-operational."

"You don't seem to care what trouble you cause," snapped the equipment officer. "Well, I can tell *you* that signal of yours is going to bring you trouble. The Commander-in-Chief is furious about it."

He nearly had the receiver slammed down his ear.

The summons to Fighter Command Headquarters came a day later. Waiting to be ushered in to the C.-in-C., Bader did not regret what he had done but was acutely conscious that he was only an acting squadron leader. A corporal appeared and said: "He'll see you now, sir."

Sir Hugh Was "Stuffy"

Behind a tidy desk sat the austere Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding, eyes pale and cold under tufty eyebrows and lips pursed in the craggy face. Known as "Stuffy" because he could be very stuffy, he gazed unwinking and said baldly: "What's all this about equipment and that signal of yours, Bader?"

Bader explained that he had done everything he could to get tools and spares, and then decided he would have to do something extra because if the Germans attacked, his squadron would soon be unable to get off the ground. Without a word Dowding passed a typewritten report over and Bader saw it was from the equipment officer—an account of the phone conversation.

"I did have an acrimonious conversation with an equipment officer, sir, but it was between two officers of equal rank. He tried to shake me by saying you were furious about my signal and that annoyed me."

"Oh, he said I was furious, did he?" Dowding pressed his buzzer.

In a minute the equipment squadron leader came in. His eyes flickered at Bader, whose eyes flickered back.

"Did you say I was furious about the signal from 242 Squadron?" Dowding asked.

"Yes, sir. I knew you would be very angry about such a signal."

Dowding said coldly: "I will not have any officer taking my name in vain or predicting my emotions. Your job is—or was—to help the squadrons in the field. You will be off this headquarters in twenty-four hours."

After the equipment officer went out Dowding seemed to relax. He pressed another buzzer and shortly a grey-haired air vice marshal walked in—"Daddy" Nichol, who looked after all equipment for Fighter Command. He listened to Bader repeat his story and said cheerfully: "All right. Now you come with me and we'll fix this up."

End Of The Storm

Next morning, the lorries were rolling past the Coltishall guardroom and up to the maintenance hangar where West, with brisk good humour, supervised his fitters unloading crates of spare wheels, sparking plugs, oleo legs, spanners, files, piston rings and about four hundred other bits and pieces. By evening, after the last lorry had gone, West was surrounded by boxes.

"Have you got enough, Mr. West?" Bader asked.

"Enough?" said West. "I've got enough for ten squadrons, sir. What I want now is somewhere to stow it."

"That's your problem," the C.O. said. "I'm leaving the aircraft side to you now while I get busy with the pilots. This is going to be the best squadron in the command if it kills me."

He drove to his office and sent a signal to Group, with a copy to Fighter Command: 242 SQUADRON NOW FULLY OPERATIONAL.

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(See "Daily Herald" on Saturday, May 22, for early news of *Bullets* No. 1,935 result.)

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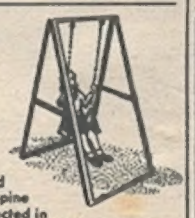

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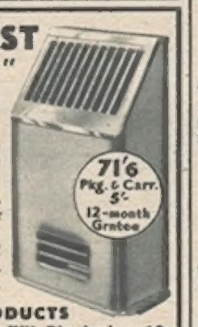

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